GAMBIT

CHESS EXPLAINED

THE GRÜNFELD

Valentin Bogdanov

A guide to a dynamic counterattacking opening

GAMBIT

Chess Explained: The Grünfeld

Valentin Bogdanov

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GAMBIT

First published in the UK by Gambit Publications Ltd 2009

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ISBN-13: 978-1-906454-06-7
ISBN-10: 1-906454-06-X

DISTRIBUTION:
Worldwide (except USA): Central Books Ltd, 99 Wallis Rd, London E9 5LN, England.
Tel +44 (0)20 8986 4854 Fax +44 (0)20 8533 5821. E-mail: orders@Centralbooks.com

Gambit Publications Ltd, 99 Wallis Rd, London E9 5LN, England.
E-mail: info@gambitbooks.com
Website (regularly updated): www.gambitbooks.com

Edited by Graham Burgess
Typeset by John Nunn
Cover image by Wolff Morrow
Printed by the MPG Books Group in the UK.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
Ch	championship
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
½-½	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
(D)	see next diagram

Introduction

During the first quarter of the 20th century, revolutionary ideas took hold in the chess world. The classical opening principles, defined by Steinitz and polished by Tarrasch, came under fire from all sides. One of the innovations was the opening first regularly employed by one of the top players of those years, the Austrian grandmaster Ernst Grünfeld, whose name is forever reflected in the title of the opening.

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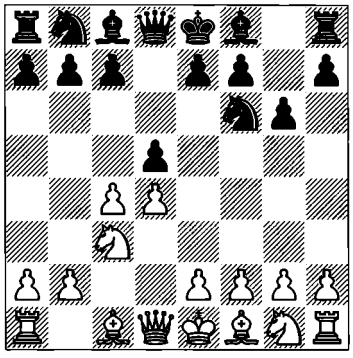

The most traditional way to reach this position is via 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5. Strictly speaking, our opening also encompasses variations where White delays the move ♘c3 or even avoids it altogether, most notably in systems with g3. However, the initial moves by Black always combine preparations for the fianchetto of the king's bishop with the provocative ...d5, tempting White into building a large pawn-centre. Black hopes that his pieces, once developed, will create threats against that centre, while limiting the freedom of the enemy pieces to choose their residences.

The reputation of an opening depends on at what level and how often the opening is employed. Our opening has found favour with many outstanding chess-players and has often been used in competitions of the highest level, including world championship matches, with Botvinnik, Smyslov and Fischer among its staunch supporters. It was Kasparov's main choice in two of his matches with Karpov, which led to its second peak of popularity. Things are a bit quieter these days, but the Grünfeld retains a large fan base among today's grandmasters and a worthy place under the sun.

The opening has sprung many branches, but despite the great variety of these systems, they can be divided into two main groups according White's strategy: either he picks up the gauntlet and acquires a pawn-centre early on, or opts for natural development, temporarily postponing hostilities in the centre.

This series of books does not aspire to encyclopaedic depth; the goal is to explain the ideas behind the opening and its individual systems, with particular emphasis on the more popular and important variations in recent practice. Of course, different players may have different opinions on popularity.

The chosen system for dividing the material into chapters doesn't always follow the traditional approach, but the author believes it to be the most logical.

1 Fianchetto Grünfeld: White Plays g3

As in many Closed openings, the fianchetto of White's king's bishop is a popular idea here as well. The pros and cons of this choice are universal: positioned on the long diagonal in relative safety, the bishop makes a worthy contribution to the white army's potential. However, the fianchetto requires a tempo to be spent on the move g3, and if the bishop is exchanged, then the legacy will be weak light squares, as a rule in the immediate vicinity of the king. A significant benefit for White is the fact that the fianchetto grants him additional move-order options, and leaves Black in the dark longer. White will decide how to deploy of the rest of his forces a few moves later, according to Black's actions.

Black's replies can be divided into two groups:

a) ...d5 is prepared by a preliminary ...c6, to retake with the pawn in case of an exchange. This is the orthodox approach to the problem of the centre and is contrary to the main strategic idea of the Grünfeld (we should note that Botvinnik classified systems with g3 as avoiding the Grünfeld Defence). Nevertheless, it gives Black an extremely solid position.

b) White is allowed to seize the centre, so as to create the counterplay typical of this opening, with the help of piece pressure and undermining pawn-thrusts.

Game 1 (Malakhov-Mamedyarov) examines the lines where in reply to ...c6 and ...d5 White immediately exchanges on d5. This leads to a symmetrical pawn-structure, and White will seek to capitalize on his first-move advantage. The game is of a relatively quiet character.

In **Game 2** (Ribli-Volokitin), White does not hurry with the exchange on d5. Instead he attempts to force Black to relinquish the central outpost by means of piece pressure.

The remaining two games feature lines without ...c6, where Black invites White to set up a pawn-centre in more typical Grünfeld fashion.

White plays in reserved fashion in **Game 3** (P.H.Nielsen-Carlsen), consolidating his centre and gradually preparing a further advance. He ends up with a lone pawn on d5, and Black resorts to tactical measures in an effort to neutralize White's plans.

The pawns advance immediately in **Game 4** (Koneru-Areshchenko), and once more a structure arises with an isolated white pawn on d5. While this pawn is a potential target, it also cramps Black and may fix the weakness on e7, or become a powerful passed pawn. We witness a lively debate on the pros and cons of this important formation.

Game 1 [D79]

Vladimir Malakhov – Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

Spanish Team Ch, Sant Lluis 2005

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 c6

Instead of seeking piece pressure on White's centre, Black chooses a more classical approach by securing a pawn presence on d5. With the standard move-order, 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3, if Black wishes to adopt this method, it is already

high time for 3...c6. Should this move be postponed, White has the time to play e4 with a likely transposition to the King's Indian Defence: 3...♗g7 4 ♗g2 c6 5 e4 d6.

5 0-0

It is more common to postpone castling for a few moves in order to use the tempo more productively in the battle for the initiative. In particular, that's how Karpov treated this variation in several games in his matches against Kasparov. After 5 d4 d5 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 ♘e5 Black acquiesced to 8...e6, which White can view as an achievement, though Black retains a sufficient reserve of solidity.

5...0-0 6 d4 d5 7 cxd5

If White wants to maintain the pawn tension, he can choose between 7 ♘bd2, 7 ♕b3 and 7 b3. The natural 7 ♘c3 allows 7...dxc4 and is not as popular.

7...cxd5 *(D)*

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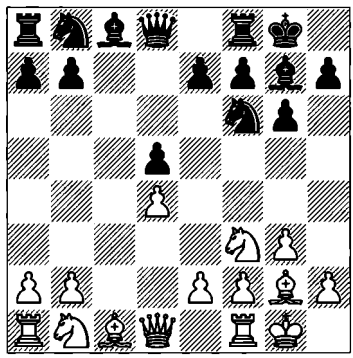

Now the queen's knight can be developed to its most natural square, but Black has obtained the same privilege. The position is absolutely symmetrical; there is an open line, which is a likely avenue to mass exchanges of major pieces. White retains the first-move advantage and can fight for the initiative, but there is little tension left and the game often quickly ends in a draw. Of course, if both sides wish to find a way to continue the struggle, they always can. The symmetry can be broken with an exchange of knights on c3 or c6 (that is, by White playing ♘e5 and meeting ...♘c6 with ♘xc6, or by Black playing ...♘e4 and, if permitted, making the equivalent exchange on c3).

8 ♘e5

This move takes control of c6 and hampers the symmetrical knight jump to e4. The natural alternative 8 ♘c3 invites Black to decide whether to accept the appearance of a pawn on c6 or to try to create such a pawn in White's camp:

a) After 8...♘c6 9 ♘e5, Black should avoid 9...♘xe5?! 10 dxe5 ♘g4 11 ♘xd5 ♘xe5 12 ♗g5 with strong pressure for White, so the main reply is 9...e6 10 ♘xc6 bxc6. It's doubtful that Black will succeed in carrying out ...c5, so White keeps a slight edge.

b) 8...♘e4 is preferred if the goal is to give White a pawn on c3. Now 9 ♘xe4 dxe4 10 ♘e5 (10 ♘g5 ♕xd4 11 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 12 ♘xe4 steers the game towards a draw, except that now it is Black who has the more active position) promises White little, and Black can choose between several good continuations: 10...♕d5, 10...♘d7 and 10...f6. White can allow the exchange on c3 by 9 e3 or 9 ♘d2 when, having an extra tempo, he can carry out c4 and move into a standard middlegame.

8...♘g4!? *(D)*

As already mentioned, 8...e6 is quite acceptable. After 9 ♘c3 Black has a further choice between 9...♘fd7, which is considered the most solid continuation, and 9...♘c6, inviting departure from the symmetry of the pawn-structure and starting the debate about the pros and cons of a pawn on c6.

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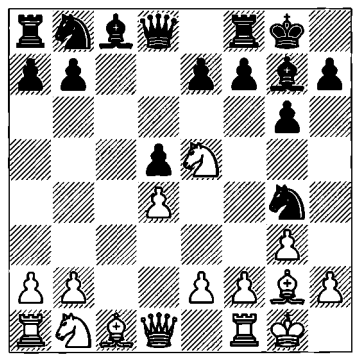

9 ♘xg4

9 f4 also promises little: after 9...♘xe5 10 fxe5 (10 dxe5, leading to less explored positions, has also been seen) Black will sooner or later play the undermining ...f6, returning to a symmetrical pawn-structure and further manoeuvring play.

9...♗xg4 10 ♘c3

There are positive and negative sides of the bishop's position on g4. Black cannot defend

the threatened d5-pawn with the natural ...e6 as long as the bishop is on this square; with its line of retreat cut off, the bishop would be quickly lost. On the other hand, the bishop prevents White from playing e3 and helps with the counterattack on d4.

The immediate 10 h3 is well answered with 10...♗d7, and if 11 ♗xd5 then 11...♘c6, when two white pawns are *en prise* and one of them will be lost, as trying to hold on to the loot with 12 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 is too risky; light squares are more important.

10...♘c6 11 ♗e3?! *(D)*

The generally accepted continuation is 11 h3, when 11...♗d7 12 e3 e6 looks the most solid, but 11...♗e6 is quite possible.

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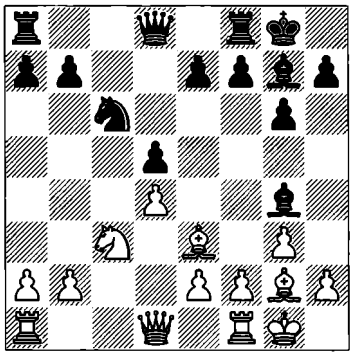

With the text-move, White persists in his attempts to demonstrate the weakness of the bishop's position on g4, and defends his pawn while keeping that of his opponent under fire. It's not clear whether that amounts to much if the symmetry is maintained with 11...♗e6, but Black has a more energetic continuation at his disposal.

11...e5!

Now Black will obtain an IQP on the d4-square. The cons of this pawn don't always outweigh its pros. In minor-piece endgames it limits the g7-bishop and as a rule White has the advantage, but with major pieces present, the pawn offers Black a space advantage and highlights the weakness on e2.

12 ♘xd5

It is hard to explain the motives behind the decision taken by White in Wang Yue – Vachier-Lagrave, Lausanne 2006: 12 dxe5? d4 13 ♗xc6 dxc3 14 ♗xb7 ♖b8 15 ♗e4 cxb2 16 ♖b1 ♕xd1 17 ♖fxd1 ♗xe5 18 ♗xa7 ♖bd8; with the enemy pawn on b2, what advantage can White hope for?

12...exd4

It makes sense to gain a tempo and keep more pieces on the board.

13 ♗c1

13 ♗f4 can be met by 13...g5, taking the last retreat-square away from the knight and provoking promising complications: 14 ♗c1 ♖e8 15 ♖e1 ♖e5 16 h3 ♗e6 17 e4 f5.

13...♖e8 *(D)*

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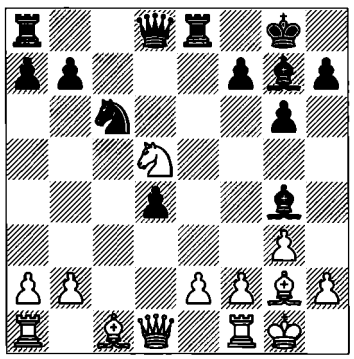

The weakness on e2 is already subjected to pressure and more than balances out the potential weakness of the pawn on d4. Black has the advantage in development and space, while his pieces can be more easily relocated for play on the flanks. Nevertheless, at the moment Black's advantage is minimal.

14 ♖e1 ♖c8 *(D)*

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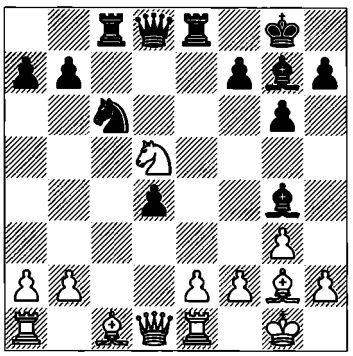

15 h3

Initiating the transfer of the knight to the blockading square d3. The immediate 15 ♘f4 is met by the unpleasant 15...♘b4, while the prophylactic 15 a3 runs into 15...d3 16 ♕xd3 ♘d4 and White must pick the lesser evil and

part with the exchange after 17 ♗e3. Therefore he drives the bishop away first, and then restricts the enemy knight.

15...♗f5 16 a3 ♕d7 17 ♔h2 ♗e4

The exchange of light-squared bishops is part of Black's plan of strengthening the position – the enemy king's cover is weakened and his light squares become vulnerable to the manoeuvres by the black pieces.

18 ♘f4 ♗xg2 19 ♔xg2 ♘e5 20 ♘d3 *(D)*

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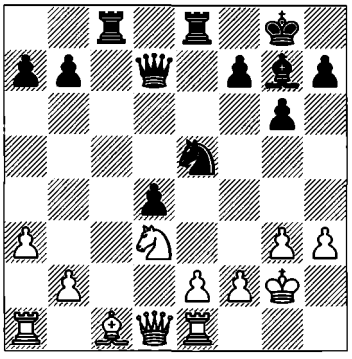

20...♘c4

This manoeuvre does not bring any additional benefits.

The c3-knight bolsters White's defences and Black's priority should be to exchange it off; the question is how. 20...♕b5 or 20...♕d5+ looks good, gradually improving the piece placement, but note the attempt to win a pawn immediately doesn't achieve its goal because of the weakness of the back rank: 20...♕d5+ 21 ♔g1 ♘xd3 22 ♕xd3 ♕e4 23 ♗f4 ♖c2 24 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 25 ♖ac1.

21 ♗d2

White, of course, resists the temptation to play b3, as the resulting hole on c3 would portend a catastrophe once the black knight is transferred to that square.

21...♕b5 22 ♖b1 h5 *(D)*

This pawn raid is typical and useful: allowing ...h4 is undesirable, and the symmetric counter weakens the squares around the white king even more.

23 h4 ♖e4

White has no chronic weaknesses, but neither has he a hint of counterplay nor a chance to provoke a crisis, while his opponent can test various piece configurations at his leisure. Playing this kind of position is psychologically

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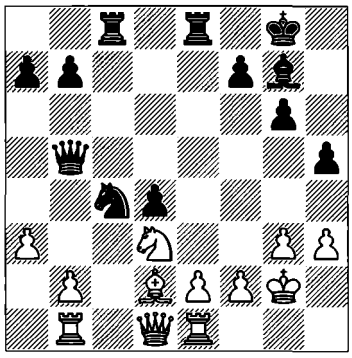

unpleasant. The e4-rook fulfils several functions – it exerts pressure down the half-open e-file, it overprotects the pawn on d4, and can participate in the attack on the white king. Moreover, there is no way for White to drive the rook away.

24 ♗f4 ♖ce8 25 ♕c2 ♘b6 26 ♖bd1

It is more logical to occupy the open file. While White does leave the c1-square free for the bishop, it could do just as fine on g5; should Black drive it away with ...f6, the resulting weakening could come in handy in the future.

26...♘d5 27 ♗c1 b6 28 ♔f1?!

One possible way to strengthen Black's position involves the transfer of the bishop to d6, when ...f5-f4 or the knight sacrifice on e3 will have to be taken into account. Therefore White protects e2 in order to offer a knight exchange. However, the king's position on f1 is precarious, which gives Black various tactical chances.

28...♕d7 *(D)*

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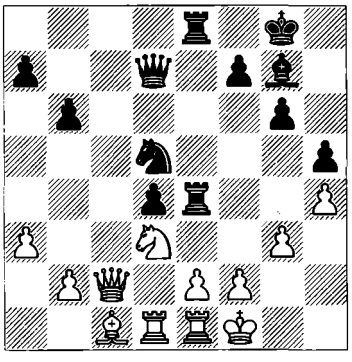

29 ♘f4

There is nothing better.

29...♘xf4

Black could have taken advantage of the unfortunate position of the enemy king with 29...♗h6 30 ♘xd5 (30 ♘g2 loses to 30...♕h3 31

♖g1 ♘f6 32 f3 ♗xc1 33 ♖xc1 ♖g4!) 30...♕xd5. Then 31 ♗xh6 is bad because of 31...♖xe2 with mate on h1, while 31 ♔g1 ♗xc1 32 ♖xc1 d3 brings White little joy, and on 31 e3 the most incisive is 31...♖xe3 32 ♖xe3 ♗xe3 33 ♗xe3 ♕f3.

30 ♗xf4 ♗f6

The blow at h4 cannot be averted.

31 ♕d2

31 e3 loses to 31...♕h3+ 32 ♔g1 dxe3, when any recapture is met by the exchange sacrifice on e3, sweeping away all the kingside pawns.

31 ♔g2 ♗xh4 32 e3 ♗f6 33 f3 ♖4e7 34 e4, closing the e-file, looks more stubborn, but here too Black's extra pawn and the white king's weakened cover should bring Black victory.

31...♗xh4 32 gxh4 g5 *(D)*

It seems that White underestimated this resource.

33 f3

This is tantamount to resignation, but after 33 hxg5 ♕h3+ 34 ♔g1 ♕g4+ 35 ♗g3 h4 36

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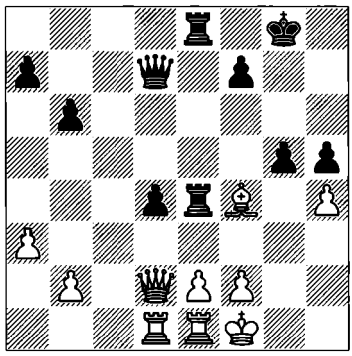

♕d3 Black has a pleasant choice between 36...♖8e5 and 36...♖f4 threatening 37...♖e3.

33...♖xf4 34 ♔g2 ♕f5 35 e4 dxe3 36 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 37 ♕xe3 ♖xh4 38 ♖d8+ ♔h7 39 ♕c3

White even manages to weave a mating-net, but Black is first to land the blow, of course.

39...♕h3+ 40 ♔f2 ♕h2+ 41 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 42 ♔f2 ♖h2+ 43 ♔e3 ♕g1+ 44 ♔e4 ♖h4+ 45 ♔e5 ♖f4 46 b4 ♕g3 47 ♕d3+ ♖f5++ 0-1

Game 2 [D78]

Zoltan Ribli – Andrei Volokitin

Slovenian Team Ch, Celje 2004

1 ♘f3 g6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 d5 5 0-0 c6 6 ♘bd2

White's move-order avoids the 6 c4 dxc4 *(D)* variation that is considered rather pleasant for Black.

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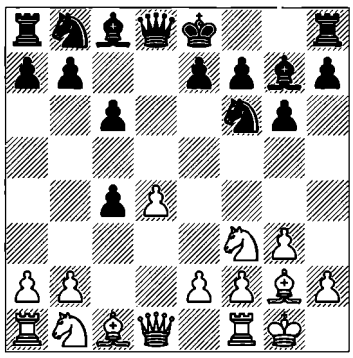

Now there are several gambit continuations, such as 7 ♘c3, 7 ♘bd2 and 7 ♘a3, when White obtains at least some compensation for the pawn; whether it is sufficient is a moot question.

The pawn can be regained with 7 a4, but that requires time expenditure and weakens squares on the queenside. Black gets comfortable development; for example, 7...♘a6 8 ♘a3 0-0 9 ♘xc4 ♗e6 10 b3 ♗d5 with ...c5 to follow.

7 ♘e5 deserves a separate mention. It fails to regain the pawn because Black can counterattack against d4 by 7...♘g4, when 8 f4 0-0 9 e3 ♘xe5 10 fxe5 c5 11 ♘a3 ♘c6 is more than pleasant for Black. The game Bologan-Volokitin, Sarajevo 2005 is of interest: 8 ♘xc4 ♕xd4 9 ♕c2 0-0 10 ♘ba3 ♕f6 11 h3 ♘e5 12 ♘a5. The compensation is hardly adequate, although if tense irrational play was White's wish, then it has been fulfilled.

6...0-0 7 c4

Unlike in the previous game, White refrains from the exchange on d5 and continues the struggle for pawn superiority in the centre, preparing e4 or hoping to force Black to take on c4.

This pawn move does not have to be linked with the move ♘d2, and there are some move-order issues here, as we have already seen in the

previous note. To avoid confusion, we shall take the position arising after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 ♘f3 c6 6 0-0 d5 *(D)* as the starting point for our discussion of these alternatives:

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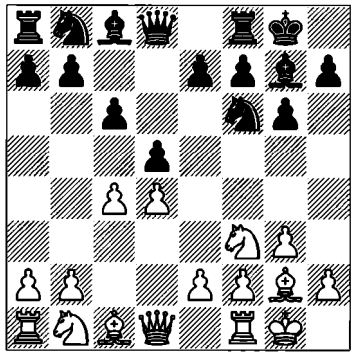

a) 7 ♘c3 posts the knight more actively, but after 7...dxc4 the game takes on a gambit character. Although such gambits have a right to exist, Black has a fully adequate, and indeed promising, game. 8 ♘e5 is well met with either 8...♗e6 or 8...♘g4, while the prophylactic 8 a4, aimed against the possible ...b5, as a rule keeps the pawn safe, at the cost of a loss of time and the weakening of the squares on the b-file.

b) 7 b3 *(D)* protects the c4-pawn at once, while also clearing a spot on the long diagonal for the bishop.

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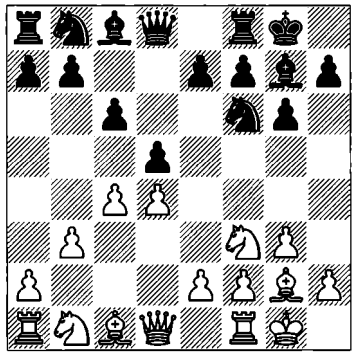

White is still planning to prepare the e4 advance. Black can attempt to capitalize on his temporarily greater control of the long diagonal by 7...dxc4 8 bxc4 c5 9 ♗b2 cxd4 10 ♘xd4. He has then spoiled White's pawn-structure, but at the cost of activating the enemy pieces. The other method is relatively tame: fighting for piece control of e4. Here is a possible scenario: first the black knight leaps to e4, and waits for White to develop his queen's bishop. Then after an exchange of knights the c8-bishop relocates to the newly vacated e4-square to neutralize its counterpart on g2.

c) 7 ♘e5 is similar to the previous game, but with the pawns on c4 and c6 intact. In this scenario 7...e6 is too disrespectful of the c8-bishop, but 7...♘g4 is quite good. A certain slowness of White's development can even justify Black in surrendering the centre with 7...♗e6 or 7...dxc4 for the sake of rapid piece deployment followed by a counterattack: 7...♗e6 8 cxd5 ♗xd5 9 ♗h3 c5, Speelman-Kasparov, World Cup, Reykjavik 1988.

d) 7 ♕b3 *(D)*.

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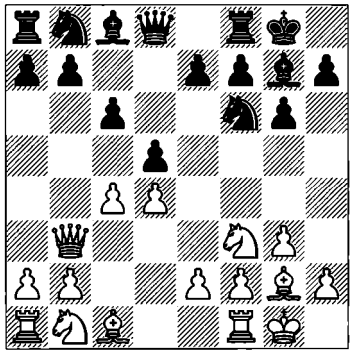


This is the most popular move. The plan is to increase the pressure on the d5-pawn while restraining the c8-bishop by the attack upon b7. Of the many possible replies we shall note three:

d1) 7...a5 is an attempt to harass the white queen and seize the initiative on the queenside. After 8 ♘c3 a4 9 ♕b4 dxc4 10 ♕xc4 ♕a5, despite ceding the centre, Black acquires sufficient freedom to develop his pieces comfortably.

d2) 7...dxc4 is an immediate surrender of the centre in order to take advantage of the early development of the white queen: Black plans to mobilize his forces with gain of tempo.

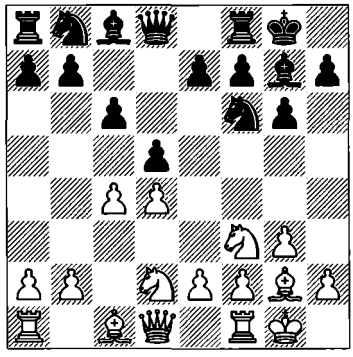
d3) 7...♕b6 brings about a characteristic situation, seen in many openings, where the queens sit in opposition to one another. It is often hard for both players to judge whether to exchange or to allow the opponent to make the exchange. On the one hand, doubled b-pawns can prove somewhat weak, but the half-open a-file can be useful too. The decision tends to

depend on subtle positional nuances, which need to be continually re-evaluated as long as the queens remain on b3 and b6. After 8 ♘c3 ♖d8 (several other continuations have been tested, but today the main discussion is centred around this reply), White can force the matter by 9 c5 ♕xb3 10 axb3 ♘a6 11 ♗f4, with chances for both sides. White aims to push e4; Black, correspondingly, ...e5.

e) Finally, 7 ♘bd2 transposes to the position we are about the examine in the main game.

Thus we now return to 7 c4 *(D)*:

B



This approach is fairly popular. The knight supports the preparations for e4 equally well from d2 while defending c4 at the same time. Of course, on d2 it is posted less actively than on c3 while blocking the bishop's diagonal. However, it is rare for a move to have only pluses and no minuses.

7...a5

Anticipating the fianchetto of White's queen's bishop, Black demonstrates his readiness to initiate play on the queenside in order to seize space and open the a-file. That does not mean that e4 receives less attention; on the contrary, control of this square is the main goal.

Black's other main options are to play more directly in the centre with 7...♗f5 or 7...♘e4.

When choosing 7...♗f5, Black hopes, after 8 b3 ♘e4 9 ♗b2, to achieve the exchange of his light-squared bishop either via e4 (9...♘xd2 10 ♕xd2 ♗e4) or via h3 (9...♘d7 10 ♘h4 ♘xd2 11 ♕xd2 ♗e6 12 e4 dxe4 13 ♗xe4 ♗h3 14 ♖fe1 ♘f6 15 ♗g2, Ki.Georgiev-Shirov, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2007).

These same positions frequently arise even after the immediate 7...♘e4, though 8 b3 gives Black the additional possibility of 8...c5 9 ♗b2 ♘xd2 10 ♕xd2 dxc4 11 bxc4 cxd4 12 ♘xd4, when White's pieces are active but his pawns are broken. 8 e3 is also possible, already threatening to take on e4; after 8...♘xd2 9 ♘xd2 White controls e4, but his knight has been decentralized and his development has not advanced.

We now return to 7...a5 *(D)*:

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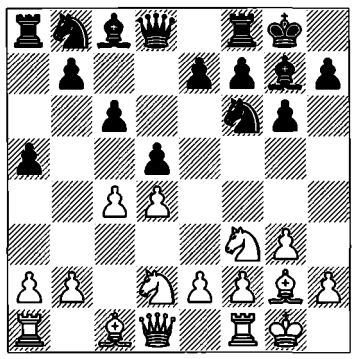

8 b3

8 ♘e5 is worth mentioning here as well, with the standard 8...♘g4 as an adequate reply.

8...a4 *(D)*

8...♗f5 and 8...♘e4 are played in this position as well, which often comes down to a transposition of moves. However, the plan with ...c5 makes little sense at this point since it doesn't harmonize well with ...a5 and means not just the loss of a tempo but also weakened squares along the b-file.

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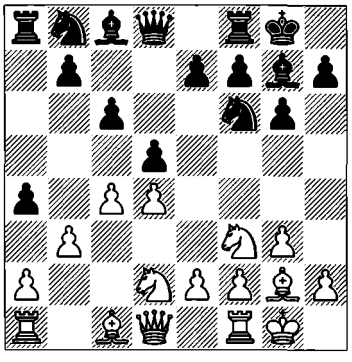

9 ♗b2

This is the most natural move. At the moment, the bishop's scope is limited by the d4-pawn, but White hopes that the pawn will acquire mobility when e4 is achieved. It's also possible to develop the bishop to a3, temporarily

closing the a-file. In that case, Black generally endeavours to keep the position closed, placing the e-pawn on e6. This is preceded by ...♗g4, since leaving the queen's bishop stuck in its own camp would be too passive. This leads to an exchange of this bishop for a white knight, whereupon White can hope in the long run to exploit his bishop-pair. It's possible for Black to offer an exchange of the dark-squared bishops with ...♗f8; while the offer is hard to decline, a result of the exchange is some weak squares around the black king. Achievements of this sort are of limited benefit to White, though, as Black's resources are quite sufficient to maintain approximate equality.

White can also play 9 bxa4, opening files on the queenside. 9 b4 is also possible, with the opposite idea, viz. to avoid opening the position. However, after 9...dxc4 Black gets comfortable squares for his pieces, and weaknesses (the b4-pawn or light squares in case of a3) now appear in the white camp as well.

9...♘e4 *(D)*

Again 9...♗f5 is more common here, but the text-move is a tempting idea: Black unmasks his dark-squared bishop, places c3 under control, and forces White to take ...a3 into account.

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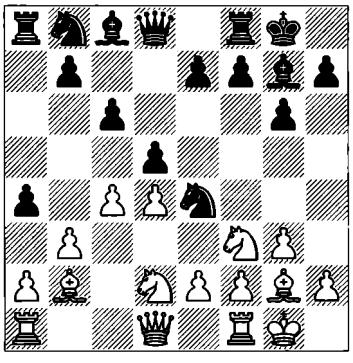

10 ♘xe4

10 bxa4 leads to simplifications after 10...♘c5 11 a5 ♖xa5 12 ♘b3 ♘xb3 13 axb3 ♖xa1, while 10 ♕c1 fails to prevent 10...a3: 11 ♗xa3 ♘xd2 12 ♘xd2 ♗xd4 (Vukić-Ruck, Banja Luka 2007). The text-move changes the pawn-structure and sharpens the coming struggle.

10...dxe4 11 ♘e1 f5 12 ♘c2

White's plans include undermining the enemy pawn-chain, but 12 f3 allows an immediate counterattack by 12...c5 13 ♘c2 ♘c6. Therefore it is a sensible idea to bolster the d4-pawn first.

12...♘d7 13 ♘e3

13 e3 has been played, to which 13...♘c5 looks like a good reply.

13...♘c5 *(D)*

13...e5 leads to unclear complications after 14 d5 f4 15 ♘c2 f3 16 exf3 exf3 17 ♗xf3 ♖xf3 18 dxc6 bxc6 19 ♕xf3 e4 20 ♕xe4 ♗xb2, while Black may even play 13...f4 at once.

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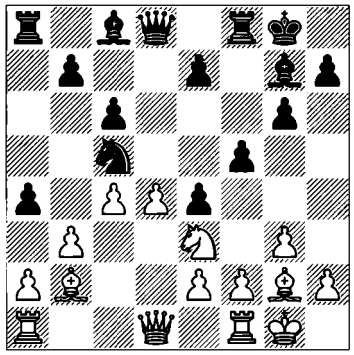

White has no concrete threats, but what is he to do? The queen must simultaneously protect b3 and d4. 14 b4 is bad because of 14...a3; that leaves us with....

14 ♖b1 axb3 15 axb3 *(D)*

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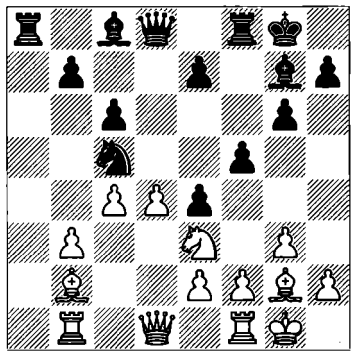

15...♖a2

Supporting the assault on b2 and making White face the same problems again.

16 ♗a1

White has regrouped, and the c5-knight is *en prise*. If Black now fails to capitalize on the temporary activity of his pieces, he will have to sound a retreat, and it is not clear how well the a2-rook will manage it.

16...♖xa1 *(D)*

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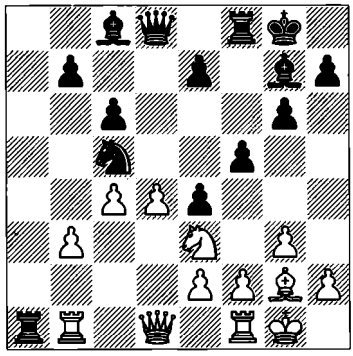

Consistent, at least; retreating the knight would render Black's preceding play dubious, while now he gets a pawn for the exchange and sentences White's light-squared bishop to life imprisonment.

17 ♖xa1 ♗xd4 18 ♖a8?!

What did the b3-pawn do to deserve this treatment? After the natural 18 ♖b1 ♗xe3 19 fxe3 ♕xd1 20 ♖fxd1 ♗e6 *(D)* an unclear position would appear.

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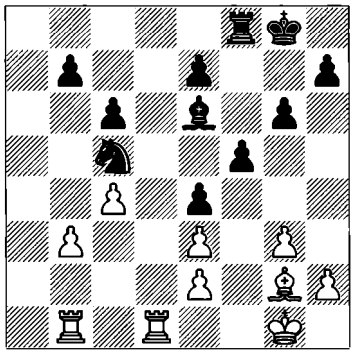

The g2-bishop is a typical example of a piece locked out of the game; its habitat is restricted to the f1-h3 diagonal (plus the h1-square). Even pushing g4 doesn't change the situation – the f5-pawn has a lot of defenders. It follows that Black has the upper hand on the queenside and risks little. On the other hand, it's not easy for him to win by playing on one flank alone, and dynamic action in the centre runs the risk of activating the enemy bishop. A sample variation: 21 b4 ♘a4 22 ♖bc1 ♔g7 23 c5 ♘b2 24 ♖d4 ♖a8.

The active sortie by the rook, chosen by White in the game, is a mistake.

18...♗xe3 19 fxe3

Here the exchange on d8 by 19 ♕xd8 would have hindered the development of the c8-bishop. In that case Black has no good reason to grab the pawn by interpolating 19...♗xf2+, because this only helps White activate his forces and gives the prisoner on g2 some hope for the future.

19...♕xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♘xb3 21 g4?!

White hastens to get this move in before Black plays ...h5, in order to keep the h-pawns on the board and have at least some sort of a target to attack. However, it is better to focus attention on the b7-pawn, by 21 ♖a3 ♘c5 22 ♖b1 ♖d8 23 ♖a5, preventing the bishop's development. Black must then seek an effective regrouping plan.

21...♗e6 *(D)*

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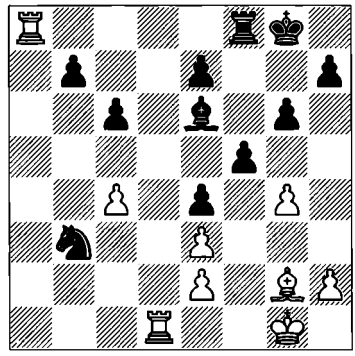

22 ♖dd8

White strives to keep a rook on the 8th rank in order to attack the h-pawn. However, this is the quickest way to lose, as the black pawns are faster. It is more stubborn to try to hang on to c4, temporarily tying the enemy bishop to the defence of f5 by 22 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 23 gxf5 gxf5 24 ♗h3, or keeping both rooks on the board with 22 ♖a7.

22...♖xd8 23 ♖xd8+ ♔f7 24 ♖h8 ♔g7 25 ♖e8 ♔f6 *(D)*

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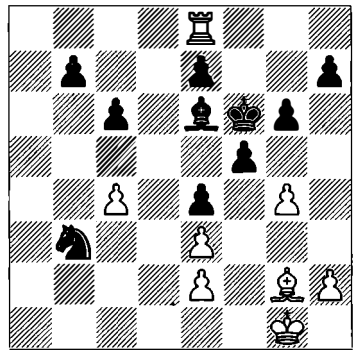

26 h4?!

Here, too, the counterattack on f5 promised more – 26 gxf5 gxf5 27 ♖b8 ♘c5 28 ♗h3 ♗xc4?! 29 ♖f8+, although Black has a won position, of course.

26...♗xc4 27 g5+ ♔e6 28 h5 gxh5

There is no reason to allow the pawn on to h6; a passed g-pawn is easier to contain.

29 ♖h8 b5 30 ♗h3 b4 31 ♖f8 ♘d2 32 ♗xf5+ ♔e5 33 ♗xh7 b3 34 ♖b8 ♗b5 0-1

Game 3 [D76]

Peter Heine Nielsen – Magnus Carlsen

Bundesliga 2004/5

Our focus in this game moves on to lines where White's cxd5 is met by ...♘xd5, with Black foregoing the move ...c6 in favour of more active methods.

As in other branches of the Fianchetto Grünfeld, there are many possible move-orders by which these lines can be reached, with a number of subtle differences in the possibilities that they offer to both sides. The choice of each player depends on what opening variations he is willing to allow or wishes to avoid, which in turn is determined by personal taste and the level of preparation as well as by the study of the corresponding factors in the opponent's games.

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 0-0 d5

With this move, the game moves closer to Grünfeld territory. White's delay in playing d4 gives Black options of ...c5, with a Symmetrical English.

6 cxd5

We should also consider the continuation 6 d4 dxc4 *(D)*.

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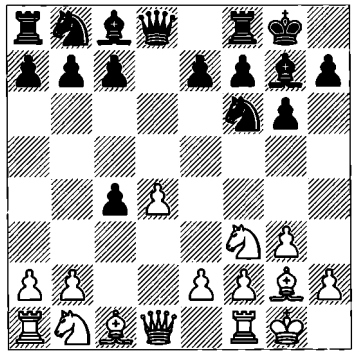

This capture is obviously a possibility whenever White plays c4 after Black has already made the move ...d5. Conversely, if White wishes to avoid these lines, he needs to play an earlier c4 and meet ...d5 with cxd5.

We should note immediately that Black isn't surrendering the centre in the expectation of keeping the extra pawn; instead he hopes to take advantage of the time White will spend regaining it. That said, 7 ♘bd2 or 7 ♘c3 implies a readiness for gambit-like play on White's part, and these moves should be compared with lines we saw in the previous game. 7 ♘e5 offers Black the choice between 7...c5 and an attempt to hang on to the extra soldier for a while by 7...♘e8 8 ♘a3 ♘d6.

The main continuation is 7 ♘a3, which is usually met with 7...c3 *(D)*.

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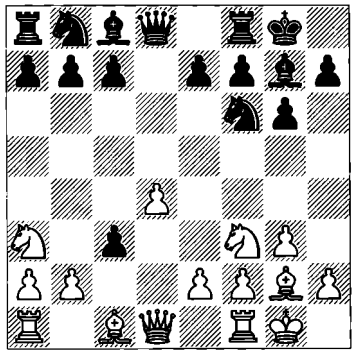

The question arises – why change White's pawn-structure in such a way as to bolster the d4-pawn? There are several reasons:

- Now the g7-bishop hinders the advance of the d-pawn.
- If the bishop's opposite number is developed to b2, it will be staring at the back of its own pawn-chain and for some time to come won't see much action.

- Black may be able to create an outside passed pawn in the endgame.

Here is the typical treatment of this position: 8 bxc3 c5 9 e3 ♘c6 10 ♕e2 ♗f5 11 ♖d1 ♕b6 12 ♗b2 ♖fd8 13 ♘c4 ♕a6 14 ♗f1 ♖ac8, and each side has his trumps, Ki.Georgiev-Areshchenko, Coventry 2005.

6...♘xd5 7 ♘c3

Let's consider yet another line – 7 d4 c5 *(D)*.

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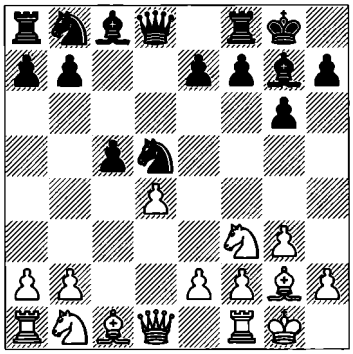

This immediate counterattack in the centre can be met in several ways:

a) 8 dxc5 is the most natural. After 8...♘a6 the plan is to pose Black some problems with the manoeuvre 9 ♘g5 e6 (Black's difficulties persist after 9...♘db4 as well) 10 ♘e4.

b) 8 e4 is another popular option. 8...♘f6 allows White a pleasant game after 9 e5 ♘d5 10 dxc5 ♘a6 11 a3 ♘xc5 12 b4 ♘e6 13 ♕b3, while the other knight retreat leads to play more typical of this opening: 8...♘b6 9 d5 e6 10 ♘c3 exd5 11 exd5.

c) Another common position, often reached via different move-orders, can arise after 8 ♘c3 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘xc3 10 bxc3. White is trying to prove that the activity of his pieces is more important than his ruined queenside. The course of events can be depicted with the pawn sacrifice in the game Aronian-Grishchuk, French Team Ch 2005: 10...♕c7 11 ♖b1 ♕xc3 12 ♘b5 ♕a5 13 ♗d2 ♕d8 14 ♗e3 ♕a5 15 ♕e1.

7...♘c6 8 d4 ♘b6

Now we reach a key decision-point, where White must choose whether to advance or support his d4-pawn.

Once more, there are some important move-order issues to highlight. Suppose Black doesn't like the idea of White being able to advance his d-pawn so freely. Could he avoid this situation? With certain sequences, yes. Let's consider the position arising after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘f3 ♗g7 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 ♗g2 ♘b6 (by voluntarily withdrawing from the centre in good time and saving a tempo on castling, Black creates pressure on the d4-pawn) 7 0-0 ♘c6 *(D)*.

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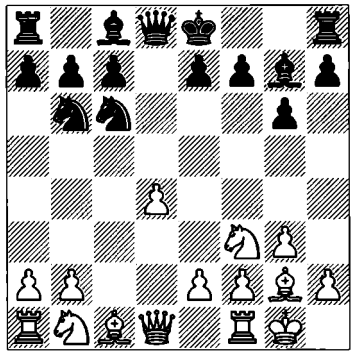

This is the same as the position in the main game except that Black hasn't castled and White hasn't played ♘c3. The pawn has come under attack before it has had a chance to advance. White is faced with a choice:

a) He can defend the pawn by 8 e3. If Black is happy just to have avoided the line with a quick d5 advance, he can transpose to standard lines by 8...0-0 (see the course of the main game), or take an independent course by 8...e5 9 ♘c3 exd4 (9...0-0 transposes to the note to Black's 9th move below) 10 exd4 0-0 (as long as the check by the rook from e1 is possible, no one is tempted by the capture) 11 ♗g5 with a fairly complicated version of the IQP formation.

b) 8 ♘c3 is an interesting pawn sacrifice. Black can decline by 8...0-0, transposing to the main game, but obviously the critical reply is 8...♘xd4 9 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 (rarely seen is 9...♗xd4, agreeing to the immediate loss of castling; in Drozdovsky-Korchnoi, Odessa 2007 White had strong pressure after 10 ♘b5 ♗e5 11 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 12 ♖d1+ ♘d7 13 f4 ♗g7 14 ♗e3 a6 15 ♘a7 c6 16 ♖ac1). White can regain the pawn at once with the relatively forcing 10 ♘b5 ♕c4 11 ♕b3 0-0 12 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 13 ♘xc7 ♖b8, but with accurate play Black has good equalizing chances. A real gambit arises after 10 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 11 ♘b5 ♗e5 12 ♗f4 ♗xf4 13 gxf4 ♔d8 14 ♖fd1+ ♘d7 with chances for both sides.

White can avoid these lines, if he wishes, by picking a different move-order, as, for example,

in the main game (as always, at the cost of giving Black extra options). Therefore we now return to the position after 8...♘b6 *(D)*:

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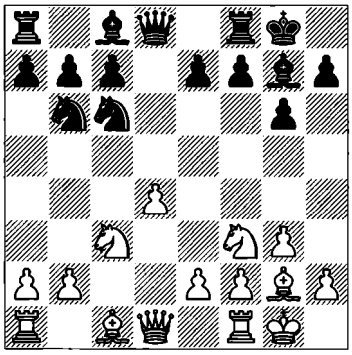

This is one of the most popular positions in the Fianchetto Grünfeld. The white d-pawn can either advance at once, or wait to be forced to do so by the move ...e5. The decision is not clear-cut, as the black pawn on e5 constitutes both a foothold in the centre and a blockage of the g7-bishop's diagonal.

9 e3

This generally implies the latter approach, as Black will soon need to play ...e5 to generate counterplay.

The alternative is of course 9 d5 ♘a5. Now:

a) 10 ♘d4 doesn't make much sense as the knight will be hanging after 10...c6.

b) 10 ♕c2 is a relatively quiet plan; White hopes to gain a tempo or two and get ahead in development after 10...c6 11 dxc6 ♘xc6 12 ♖d1 ♕e8, but the resulting symmetrical pawn-structure limits the scope of the subsequent play.

c) 10 e4 c6 leads to a struggle more typical of the Grünfeld. Now White can post his bishop on f4 at once, or first provoke a weakness on the kingside by 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗f4. A sample line runs 12...cxd5 13 exd5 ♘ac4 14 ♕e2 (the sharp 14 b3 ♗xc3 15 ♖c1 requires more practical tests). Now Black should avoid the initially tempting line 14...♘xb2?! 15 ♕xb2 ♘a4 16 ♘xa4 ♗xb2 17 ♘xb2 as three pieces are worth more than the queen in the middlegame – even with an extra pawn thrown in.

We now return to 9 e3 *(D)*.

The d4-pawn prefers to be asked to advance with ...e5; after all, the g7-bishop's diagonal is blocked then and it's easier to acquire passed status.

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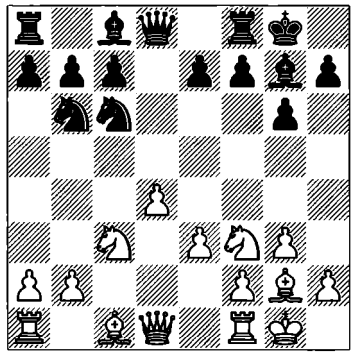

9...♖e8

For a long time the main continuation was 9...e5 10 d5. Then:

a) Normally the knight moves to a5 or e7, but we should also mention 10...e4, when it is hard to see anything better than 11 dxc6 ♕xd1 12 ♖xd1 exf3 13 ♗xf3 bxc6. Black's active pieces offset the defects in the pawn-structure. Nevertheless, White succeeded in casting doubt on this idea in Tkachev-Sutovsky, European Ch, Dresden 2007: 14 ♗d2 ♘c4 15 ♘a4 ♖b8 16 ♗c3 ♗xc3 17 bxc3; Black's activity is gradually suppressed, and the weaknesses remain.

b) 10...♘a5 presents White with a nice chance to obtain a small but solid advantage with 11 e4 c6 12 ♗g5 f6 13 ♗e3 cxd5 14 ♗xb6 ♕xb6 15 ♘xd5 ♕d8 16 ♖c1 ♘c6 17 ♕b3.

c) The retreat 10...♘e7 has been losing its appeal: 11 e4 ♗g4 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 c6 14 ♖d1 cxd5 15 exd5 ♘f5 16 d6 and the problems remain.

The fact that 9...e5 does not appear to be very pleasant for Black leads one to consider alternatives. For the time being, White's position doesn't look particularly aggressive, so Black can afford a quiet preparatory move, challenging White to find a similarly useful move. One possibility is 9...a5, hoping for 10 b3 e5, when 11 d5 (11 ♗a3 is better) is met by 11...e4. However, the benefits of ...a5 are not so clear, so the main continuation nowadays is to use the rook to reinforce the advance of the e-pawn.

We therefore return to 9...♖e8 *(D)*:

10 d5

What has changed since last move that made White consider the formerly rejected pawn advance now to be favourable? Firstly, the move e3 is useful, in that it affords the d4-square additional protection. This means that a knight on

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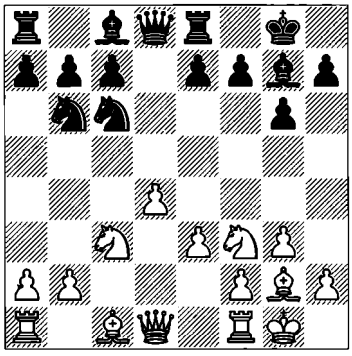


that square won't be hanging, and this in turn hinders the freeing ...c5 or ...e5 advances. Secondly, what other continuation would be useful? The black rook has prophylactically evaded the possible tempo-winning attack by the bishop from a3, so 10 b3 can be met by 10...e5, forcing the exchange on e5 with comfortable equality.

There remains 10 ♖e1 as an alternative to the text-move. Black will then sometimes keep insisting that White should disclose his plan first, usually with 10...a5 or 10...♗d7. However, 10...e5 is more common, when the following sharp line is topical: 11 d5 ♘a5 12 e4 c6 13 b3 cxd5 14 exd5 e4 15 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 (15...♗xa1 at once is bad because of 16 ♗g5, while after 15...♘xd5 16 ♗g5 f6 17 ♗d2 ♘c6 18 ♖c1 the white pieces are noticeably the more active) 16 ♖xe4 ♗xa1 17 ♗g5 ♗f6 18 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♖e8+ ♔g7 20 ♕e1 ♗g4 21 ♖xa8 ♘xa8 22 ♘e5 and 23 b4, winning back the piece and retaining an extra pawn, Podgaets-Nedilko, Odessa 2007.

10...♘a5 11 ♘d4

This move prevents the advance of the c- and the e-pawns and blocks the enemy bishop's diagonal, allowing b3. Moreover, ...c6 now requires preparation.

11...♗d7 *(D)*

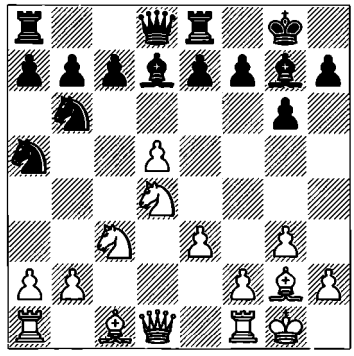
Can the undermining advance ...c6 be prevented?

12 e4

White decides simply to get on with his own play in the centre. Other moves:

a) 12 a4, threatening to push through all the way to a6 and knock out the c-pawn's support, is interesting. Indeed, the immediate 12...c5 leads to difficulties after 13 dxc6 ♘xc6 14 a5 and 15 a6, but a good reply is 12...♖c8, to meet 13 b4 with 13...c5.

W

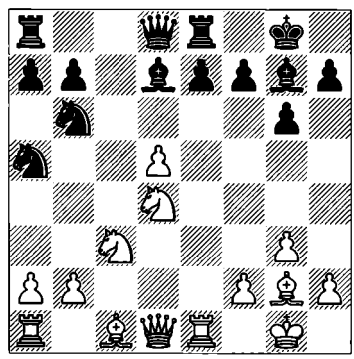


b) If White plays 12 b4 first, then after 12...♘ac4 13 a4 a5 14 b5 ♕c8 15 ♖e1 Black can secure adequate counterplay with either 15...♗h3 or 15...e5 16 ♘b3 (the simplest reply to 16 dxe6 is 16...♗xe6, when the bishop cannot be taken because of the threat of the capture on c3) 16...c6.

c) 12 b3 leads to a quiet game. After the immediate 12...c6 13 dxc6 (the standard push 13 e4 is hampered by the c3-knight's unprotected state – 13...cxd5 14 exd5 e6) 13...♘xc6 14 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 15 ♗xc6 bxc6 White has a symbolic advantage. In the absence of immediate threats there is enough time for the preparatory 12...♖c8 as well.

12...c6 13 ♖e1 cxd5 14 exd5 *(D)*

B



This is one of the key positions of the Fianchetto Grünfeld. The d5-pawn, while isolated and potentially weak, for the moment gives White a space advantage and fixes the weakness on e7. We have seen a similar formation, with the colours reversed, in Game 1; however, here there is a full set of pieces on the board, and not all of them can be said to be placed well. Black's top priority is the transfer of a knight to the blockading square d6.

14...♖c8

14...♘ac4 can also be played at once. In most cases this comes down to a mere transposition of moves after 15 b3 ♘d6 16 ♗f4 ♖c8, but then White is given a chance to develop the bishop to b2, and here it is Black who acquires additional options.

15 ♗f4

With the obvious intention of offering an exchange on e5.

15...♘bc4

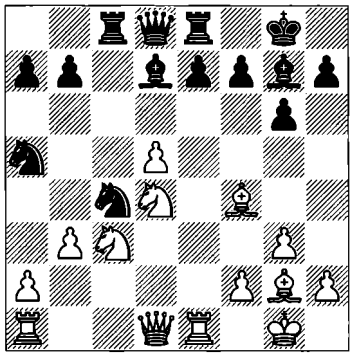
Why this knight? In the light of the following play it doesn't matter which, and the b6-square is freed for the queen just in case. Black is clearly aiming for the subsequent sharp line, and the knight is not headed for d6, when the other one would look silly stranded on a5. Other moves:

a) 15...♘ac4 16 b3 ♘d6 is more natural and solid, followed by the transfer of this knight to f5, while its colleague goes to d6 via c8.

b) 15...h6 is interesting, and provoked sharp and unclear complications after 16 ♗e5 ♗xe5 17 ♖xe5 ♘bc4 18 ♖e1 ♘xb2 19 ♕d2 ♕b6 20 ♘e6 in Grishchuk-Timofeev, Russian Ch, Moscow 2004.

16 b3 *(D)*

B



16...♘b2

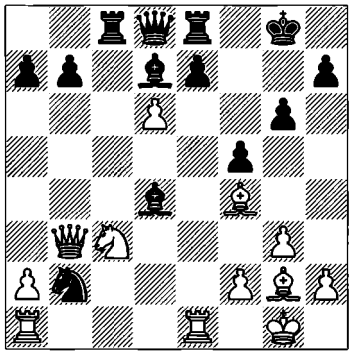
Black was perhaps under the impression that he was about to force a draw.

17 ♕d2 ♘ac4 18 bxc4 ♘xc4

It seems as if, tied to the defence of d4, the queen cannot break away from the irritating knight's pursuit. However, Nielsen's home analysis disclosed something that Carlsen had missed: first the weakening ...f5 is forced, then the queen relocates to b3 to take advantage of the newly opened diagonal.

19 ♕d3 ♘b2 20 ♕e3 ♘c4 21 ♕e4 f5 22 ♕d3 ♘b2 23 ♕d2 ♘c4 24 ♕d1 ♘b2 25 ♕b3 ♗xd4 26 d6+ *(D)*

B



The long forced line has ended and White demonstrates the results of his analysis.

26...e6

Avoiding 26...♘c4? 27 ♗d5+, 26...♔g7? 27 ♕xb2 ♗xc3 28 ♗e5+ and 26...♔h8? 27 ♕xb2 ♖xc3 28 ♗e5+.

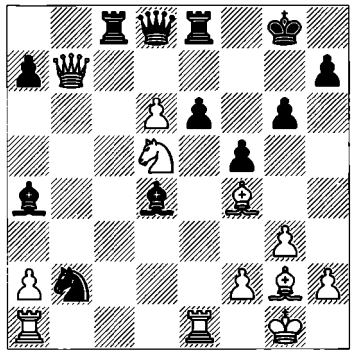
27 ♘d5 ♗a4

This move appears forced. The capture on d5 is, naturally, out of the question, while White threatened the prosaic ♘e7+.

28 ♕xb7 *(D)*

About half a year later White preferred 28 ♕b4 in Borovikov-Areshchenko, Ukrainian Ch, Rivne 2005; Black rejected 28...♗xf2+ 29 ♔h1 ♗xe1 30 ♕xb2 ♖c2 31 ♕xb7 ♗c3 32 ♘xc3 ♕f6 with an unclear game, but his continuation 28...♖c4 29 ♕d2 ♔f7 turned out to be inferior.

B



28...♘d3 29 ♘e7+ ♔h8?

This loses. The struggle remains complicated after 29...♖xe7 30 dxe7 ♕e8. Now all White has to do is reach the long diagonal and it's checkmate.

30 ♗e3 ♖c4

30...♗xa1 fails to save Black: 31 ♖xa1 ♖b8 32 ♕a6 ♗b5 33 ♕a3 and the numerous threats cannot be met.

31 ♕a6 ♘xe1

After 31...♗xe3 32 ♖xe3 Black will lose at least a piece.

32 ♕xc4 ♗xa1 33 ♗d4+ e5 34 ♕e6 1-0

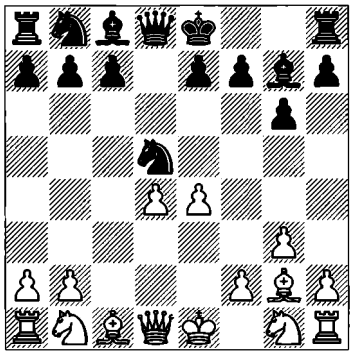
Game 4 [D72]

Humpy Koneru – Alexander Areshchenko

Lausanne 2006

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e4 *(D)*

B



White takes the maximum advantage of the opportunity to seize the central squares. The result of this strategy depends on whether he can maintain the superiority in the centre or transform this advantage into another kind.

On the ever-present question of move-orders, we should note that the approach used by White here is not available if he has already played either ♘f3 or ♘c3, the former being particularly common in many players' repertoires.

6...♘b6

The knight has two reasonable squares to move to, so we should also examine 6...♘b4. The d4-pawn is attacked three times (taking the tactical trick ...♘c2+ into account), so it must advance either at once or after a preliminary a3, shooing the knight away; alternatively White can sacrifice the pawn. Thus:

a) The unclear sacrifice 7 ♘e2 ♗xd4 8 0-0 ♗g7 9 ♕a4+ gives White the freer game and better development. Naturally, Black is not keen to exchange off his g7-bishop.

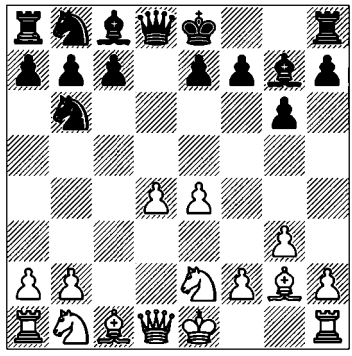
b) 7 a3 drives away the knight. Although it wins a tempo, it forces the knight to a more active post. After 7...♘4c6 8 d5 ♘d4 Black gets counterplay whether White plays 9 ♘c3 c5 10 ♘ge2 e5, when the position acquires a closed character, or temporarily allows a pin with 9 ♘e2 ♗g4 10 ♘bc3 c6 11 0-0 ♘xe2+ (the sharp 11...♘f3+ 12 ♔h1 h5 is also interesting) 12 ♘xe2 0-0.

c) 7 d5 is more common, intending to drive the knight still farther away, but that is not easy to accomplish after 7...c6, as shown by the line 8 a3 ♕a5 9 ♘c3 cxd5 10 ♗f4 (the attempt to reinforce d4 with 10 ♗e3 is met with 10...♘c2+ 11 ♕xc2 d4) 10...♘4c6 11 exd5 ♘d4. A cunning idea is 8 ♘e2 and only after 8...cxd5 to play 9 a3, when after 9...♘4c6, 10 exd5 does not allow the knight into d4, whereas the alternative post on e5 is less favourable. Instead, 9...♕a5 is risky due to 10 0-0 dxe4 11 ♗d2.

7 ♘e2 *(D)*

The pawn is under attack, and as long as it can be undermined from either side, pushing it forward is illogical, as is allowing a pin with 7 ♘f3 ♗g4, unless the idea is to secure the two bishops for the future by 8 d5 c6 9 h3.

B



7...c5

Another example of the counterplay characteristic of the Grünfeld can be seen after 7...0-0 8 0-0 ♘c6 9 d5 ♘a5 10 ♘bc3 c6.

8 d5

Now White will normally obtain a passed pawn. The attempt to get the more active piece-play by 8 dxc5 ♕xd1+ 9 ♔xd1 ♘a4 10 ♘bc3 ♘xc5 11 ♗e3 ♘ba6 12 ♔c2 cuts both ways – the white king doesn't feel safe enough in the centre.

8...e6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♘ec3

The queen's knight can also be stationed here by 10 ♘bc3. The king's knight can use the f4-square. The text-move leaves the queen's knight free to choose a route to c4, b5 or e4.

10...exd5 11 exd5 *(D)*

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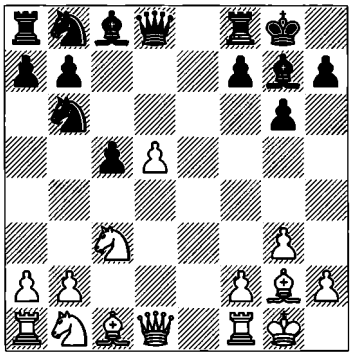

A typical pawn-formation has appeared on the board; similar ones can be found in other openings too. What factors might favour White here?

- a central passed pawn, penetrating into the enemy camp, which secures a slight advantage in space;
- control of the c6-square, the black knight's natural post;
- most of Black's pieces are on the queenside, so his king is a little short of defenders;
- there are prospects of an attack on the c5-pawn.

We should also consider the features relevant to Black's counter-chances:

- for the moment, the advance of the passed pawn is not secured;
- its support is limited to pieces only, so it is liable to become weak;
- concrete play aimed at creating a forward post on d3;
- queenside pawn-majority.

11...♘a6

This appears the most natural: from this square there are two routes to d3, as well as the possibility of joining in the attack on the d5-pawn; the blockade of the passed pawn is not necessary at the moment. In general in this line, White can afford to meet the bishop sortie ...♗f5 with g4 – he is not afraid of opening lines on the kingside, where he has more forces, while Black is forced to lose time.

12 ♘d2

The knight is bound for e4 to work on two targets – c5 and f6.

With the development incomplete, 12 d6?! looks dubious, but 12 a4 and 12 ♘a3 are sometimes seen, both of which are prophylactic in nature. Then 12...♗f5 can be met with the already-mentioned idea 13 g4 or with 13 ♗e3, striving for the quickest mobilization, when Black can prepare the exchange of the light-squared bishops with 13...♕d7.

12...♘b4

A pawn-grab by 12...♗xc3? 13 bxc3 ♘xd5 is suicidal; after 14 ♘e4 there is a dangerous draught blowing through the dark squares in the black camp.

The usual continuation is 12...♗f5 13 ♘de4 ♕d7 and now 14 ♗g5 ♗xe4 15 ♘xe4 f5, but there is also the tactical shot 14 ♗h6 with the threat of 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♘xc5 and 17 ♕d4+.

13 ♘de4 c4 *(D)*

Here too, the capture of the pawn does not look tempting: 13...♘4xd5 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♘xc5.

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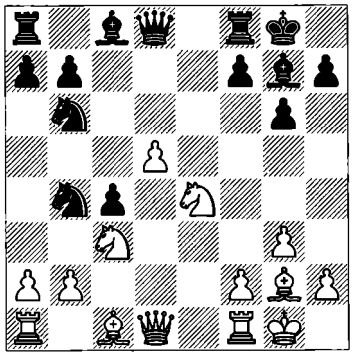


Black's queen's knight is obviously planning to park itself on d3. White must clearly fight against this, but first provokes a weakening of the a2-g8 diagonal and significantly limits the g7-bishop's scope.

14 ♗g5 f6 15 ♗e3 ♘d3 16 ♘c5

White would like to keep the pawns on the board, but defending b2 allows Black to take control of c5 with the queen on e7. After the pawn exchange Black acquires play down the c-file. The next few moves are virtually forced.

16...♘xb2 17 ♕d2 ♘d3 18 ♘xd3 cxd3 19 ♕xd3 ♗f5 20 ♕b5 ♖c8

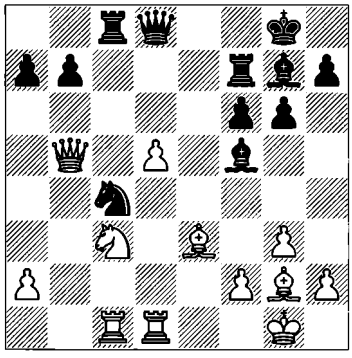
An earlier game saw a less successful continuation: 20...♕d7 21 ♗xb6 axb6 22 ♕xb6 ♖fc8 23 ♖ac1 ♗h6 24 ♘e4 ♗xe4 25 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 26 ♗xe4, Gevorgian-Baikov, Moscow 1995. Despite the opposite-coloured bishops, the exposed king and the pawn deficit leaves Black few hopes for salvation.

21 ♖ac1 ♖f7

This multi-purpose move covers the 7th rank, prepares to double the rooks and vacates a square whereby the bishop can be transferred to a promising diagonal.

22 ♖fd1 ♘c4 *(D)*

W



This position is critical for the evaluation of the plan initiated by Black's 12th move. It seems that the capture on a7 (23 ♗xa7) could now have cast doubt on it. Such a decision demanded deep calculation, for which White, perhaps, didn't have enough time.

23 ♗c5?! b6 24 ♕xc4 ♖xc5 25 ♕b3

How should we evaluate the resulting position? In the middlegame White has a strong passed pawn in the centre, though at the moment it is not easy to set it in motion, whereas Black's 2-to-1 pawn-majority on the queenside will be more important in the endgame. The white knight has a path to c6 (or, should a favourable opportunity arise, to e6) where its exchange, and consequently the relocation of the passed pawn, would usually be unfavourable for Black, though it is possible to intercept the knight earlier. Black has two powerful bishops, and the dark-squared one is particularly strong as it has no opponent; the fact that its scope is limited by the pawn on f6 is not a concern – there are other diagonals too.

25...♗f8

The preliminary 25...♗h6, driving the rook away, is interesting idea. After 26 f4, which is a useful move for Black to provoke, the plan is to initiate counterplay with 26...g5.

26 ♘b5

26 d6, steering the king to g7, is unclear. It is true that the g2-bishop comes to life, but the pawn may be simply lost.

26...♖xc1 27 ♖xc1 ♗c5 *(D)*

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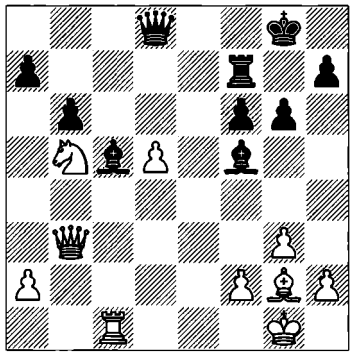

The bishop has taken up an excellent post, and White must be careful not to allow an attack on f2.

28 ♕c3

As it would not have been easy to decide on the line 28 d6 ♔g7 29 ♖e1 a6 30 ♗d5 ♖f8 (30...♖d7? loses to 31 ♗c6 axb5 32 ♗xd7) 31 ♖e7+ ♔h8 32 ♗g8 g5, White prefers a quiet game and prepares the transfer of the knight to d4.

28...♔g7 29 ♘d4 ♗d7

Black could probably hold the position without difficulty by exchanging on d4 with a subsequent ...♖c7, but that meant switching to defence without counterplay; he hopes for more.

30 h4

A characteristic decision. Having found that neither 30 ♘c6 – Black would not exchange – nor 30 ♘e6+ promises anything tangible, White plans to open a second front: she hopes to induce weaknesses with the help of the pawn-thrust or to include another combat unit in the fight.

30...♖e7 31 h5

Here 31 ♘c6?! forces the exchange, but the counterattack against f2 hands Black the initiative: 31...♗xc6 32 dxc6 ♖e2 33 ♖f1 ♖xa2.

31...♖e5

It is more sensible to get rid of the pesky pawn with 31...gxh5, acquiescing to a certain weakening of the kingside structure.

32 ♗f3 ♕e7? *(D)*

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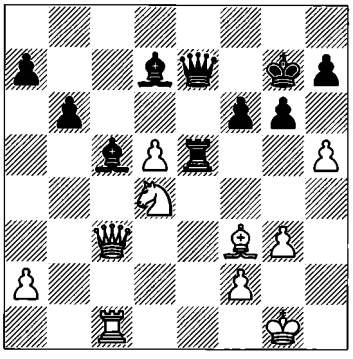

However, this careless move leads at once to a difficult position. Black fails to take into account the fact that the e2-square is no longer available.

33 ♘c6 ♗xc6 34 dxc6

What did the relocation of the passed pawn to c6 change? It seems at first that there is still nothing to support its march across the dark squares, given the opposite-coloured bishops. First, there is only one such square now, which provides White with additional tactical possibilities; second, the farther the pawn advances, the larger space advantage it secures, which translates into increased piece mobility with regard to play on two fronts.

34...♕c7

The queen sets its sights on the g3-pawn; now 35...♖e3 is threatened.

35 ♔g2

White is alert, and there at once follows a losing reply:

35...♖e7? *(D)*

However, Black has no truly satisfactory continuation.

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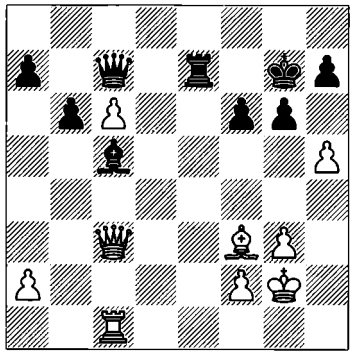

36 h6+ ♔f7 37 ♗d5+ ♔e8 38 ♕xf6

Black's greatest misfortune is not so much the loss of the pawn as the terrible position of the king.

38...♕e5

Black is forced to seek the transition into a hopeless endgame. The game could probably be finished quicker with the queens on the board, but the continuation in the game is the simplest. The further play requires no comments.

39 ♗f7+ ♔d8 40 ♖d1+ ♔c8 41 ♕xe5 ♖xe5 42 ♖d7 ♖e7 43 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 44 ♗g8 ♗f8 45 ♗xh7 ♗xh6 46 ♗xg6 ♔c7 47 ♗e4 b5 48 f4 a5 49 ♔f3 b4 50 g4 a4 51 g5 ♗f8 52 f5 b3 53 axb3 a3 54 ♗b1 ♔xc6 55 ♔e4 ♔c5 56 f6 ♔b4 57 g6 ♔xb3 58 g7 ♗xg7 59 fxg7 ♔b2 60 g8♕ 1-0

The systems with g3 continue to claim a sizeable section in the general body of theory of the Grünfeld Defence. Black has considerable freedom to dictate the strategic direction of the play, most notably with the choice between the solid yet passive systems with ...c6 and ...d5, or the debate on the typical Grünfeld theme of the pawn-centre and the struggle against it. However, especially in the latter case, White can choose between a variety of variations of differing characters.

While isolated improvements for each side are constantly introduced, the overall evaluation gives Black no particular cause for alarm.

2 Non-Standard Lines with cxd5

What do we mean by the standard version of the Exchange Grünfeld? As already mentioned in the notes to Game 3, Black benefits in many cases from the transfer of the b2-pawn to c3, which is a feature of 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3, which can be considered the main line of the whole opening. The exchange of knights, the cause of this transfer, is another plus – White enjoys an advantage in space under the cover of the pawn-centre, and one of the principles of chess strategy states that in many positions exchanges benefit the side with less space.

In this chapter we discuss lines where White exchanges pawns on d5, but in some manner avoids the change of structure resulting from bxc3. This can be accomplished by the knight being absent from c3, or by preparing to recapture with a piece on c3.

Game 5 (Laznicka-Ponomariov) is dedicated to the move 3 f3, which has been known for a long time but didn't enjoy a great reputation until recent years, when it became fairly popular. White prepares e4 without putting the knight on c3. However, this deprives the knight of the natural developing square and costs a tempo that could be used on development. Moreover, as a possible practical drawback it commits White to the Sämisch Variation if it turns out that Black prefers to play the King's Indian Defence.

In **Game 6** (Lastin-Yandemirov) the move e4 is prepared with 5 ♗d2, in order to recapture with the bishop, avoiding a structural weakness while also neutralizing the powerful enemy bishop on g7. This is a quiet, indeed almost sterile, line sometimes used when White wants to play with an absolute minimum of risk. Black's best chance for a full-blooded battle is to avoid the exchange on c3 by playing ...♘b6. While this retreat would be almost unthinkable in the standard Exchange Variation (see the note to Black's 5th move in Game 5), here the fact that White has played ♗d2 is more or less a waste of a tempo.

Finally, **Game 7** (Toulzac-Bogdanov) examines Nadanian's fantastically paradoxical idea 5 ♘a4. This move caused something of a sensation when it was introduced, but once one has overcome the initial shock caused by this move's blatant eccentricity, the logic behind it is quite clear. Nevertheless, it is no surprise that Black has found some reasonable antidotes.

Game 5 [D85]

Viktor Laznicka – Ruslan Ponomariov

Karlovy Vary 2007

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 f3 *(D)*

This move dates back to Alekhine's games, from the earliest years of Grünfeld history. White prepares e4 without playing ♘c3, but allows Black to pick one of several reputable systems from other openings – Modern Benoni, Benko Gambit and the already-mentioned Sämisch King's Indian. Evidently, this move is most expedient when you know what to expect of your opponent – or else if you have a repertoire into which the move f3 fits seamlessly.

3...d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘b6

We should compare this position to the similar one that arises after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘b6?!. This knight retreat (as well as the move-order 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3

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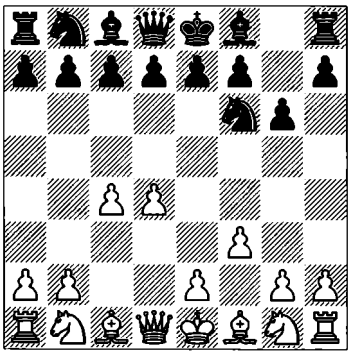
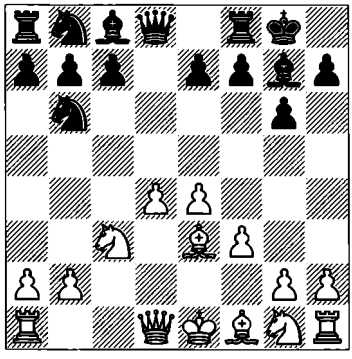


♘f3 d5?! 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘b6 6 h3; however, as long as White is not ready to play e4, the reply ...d5 can wait) has been condemned by theory, with 6 h3, forestalling the pin on g4, recognized as the best continuation. Subsequent events can develop in several ways, but Black falls short of drumming up sufficient play, as in the example line 6...♗g7 7 ♘f3 0-0 8 ♗e2 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 f5. The situation in the game is more promising for Black since the white knight is deprived of the f3-square and White's position is looser, although the general pattern of counterplay is similar (but more effective!).

6 ♘c3 ♗g7 7 ♗e3 0-0 *(D)*

The immediate 7...♘c6 presents White with a choice between 8 ♗b5 0-0 9 ♘ge2, maintaining a flexible pawn-centre, and 8 d5 ♘e5 9 f4 (9 ♗d4 0-0 10 f4 ♘g4 most often transposes) 9...♘g4 10 ♗b5+ (or 10 ♗d4) 10...♗d7 11 ♗d4. These lines are not thought critical for Black, but why give the opponent additional possibilities? Putting off castling won't save tempi.

W



8 ♕d2

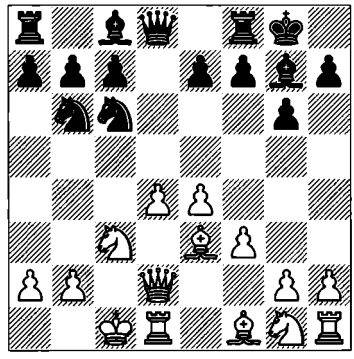
In the line 8 f4 ♘c6 9 d5 ♘a5 10 ♗d4 ♗g4 (or 10...e5 at once) 11 ♗e2 e5 Black's advantage in development counterbalances White's central preponderance.

8...♘c6

The central counterblow 8...e5 9 d5 c6 is also possible. White usually embarks at once on the attack with 10 h4, a typical advance in this sort of position. Then Black can allow the h-pawn to advance, but this probably isn't an ideal solution; e.g., 10...cxd5 11 exd5 ♘8d7 12 h5 ♘f6 13 hxg6 fxg6 14 d6 ♗e6 15 ♘h3 gave White the better chances in Laznicka-Areshchenko, Moscow 2007. The pawn can be halted with 10...h5, a move used by Shirov to win in his match against Kramnik, although the result was by no means a direct consequence of the opening. Later Ivanchuk suggested that White should play vigorously on the kingside, not balking at a pawn sacrifice, and the scales started tipping in White's favour: 10...cxd5 11 exd5 h5 12 g4 hxg4 13 h5 ♗f5 14 hxg6 fxg6 15 d6 ♘8d7 16 ♘d5 ♖f7 17 ♗g5 ♘f6 18 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 19 ♗c4, Moiseenko-Timofeev, European Clubs Cup, Saint Vincent 2005.

9 0-0-0 *(D)*

B



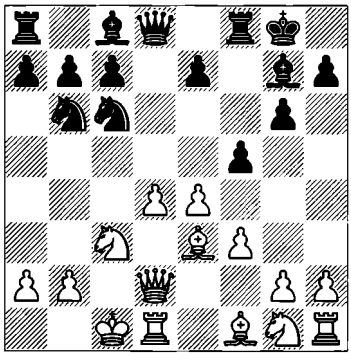
This is the basic position of this variation. It has much in common with analogous positions in other openings, such as the Sicilian Dragon, the Sämisch King's Indian and the related system in the Pirc Defence. White threatens a daring attack with a small force – h4-h5xg6, ♗h6, exchange bishops and checkmate along the h-file. In this instance there is also a distinction: the presence of a mobile pawn-centre (not a pawn-wedge as in the King's Indian). The pawn-centre is particularly attractive when the pawns stand next to each other on the same rank, with each threatening to advance; that limits the enemy pieces' options to a higher

degree. This is why White protected the d4-pawn instead of making the d5 advance. For that purpose the king had to be sent to the queenside, and opposite-side castling often heralds violent mutual attacks. Also notable is the transfer of the knight from f6 to b6, where it doesn't take part in the defence but reinforces the assault group instead. Building the centre caused a certain lag in White's development, although both the f1-bishop and the h1-rook can prove usefully placed where they stand. The moment is ripe for a counterblow by Black in the centre.

9...f5 *(D)*

This move has gained recognition in recent years. For a long time the move 9...e5 occupied centre stage. While blocking the bishop, it secures an influential square for the knight. After 10 d5 ♘d4 (the sacrifice – or blunder – of a piece can hardly be correct: 10...♘a5? 11 ♗xb6 axb6 12 b4, Rustemov-Illescas, Dos Hermanas 2005) 11 f4 c5 12 fxe5 ♗g4 13 ♖e1 ♗xe5 14 h3 ♕h4 15 ♗d3 ♖ac8 there ensues a sharp, double-edged struggle.

W



At the first glance it is not clear what Black's threats are, except that after an exchange on e4 he will obtain the g4-square. Actually, the point is that with the opening of the f-file, the f1-bishop comes under attack and the capture on d4 therefore becomes a possibility. If White replies with 10 ♗e2 then 10...e5 gains in strength.

10 h4

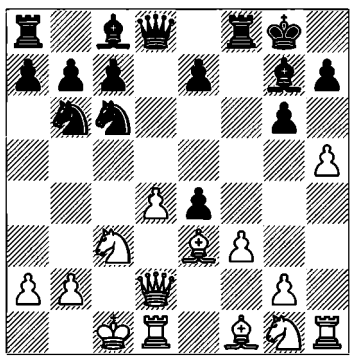
At present, of all the continuations only two enjoy wide acceptance. One is the text-move, and the other is 10 e5. This move concedes the d5-square but as compensation locks the g7-bishop out of the game. Here we should mention the game Motylev-Svidler, Wijk aan Zee 2007: 10...♘b4 11 ♘h3 (11 h4 is played more often) 11...♗e6 12 ♔b1 ♕d7 13 ♘f4 ♗f7 14 a3 a5 – a standard piece sacrifice for the sake of the initiative, which White failed to neutralize in that game.

If it proves impossible for White to maintain his broad pawn-centre, he needs to find the best way to transform this advantage into positional achievements of a different kind – a development advantage, more active pieces, etc. One such method is the attempt to use the time Black has to spend destroying the centre to launch a rapid attack on his king. That is the aim of the text-move.

10...fxe4 11 h5 *(D)*

We have already mentioned what could happen after 11 fxe4, while in the event of 11 ♘xe4 ♗e6 12 b3 a5 the question arises: who is attacking whom?

B



11...gxh5

Black secures a diagonal for his bishop, where it can take part both in the defence and the counterattack.

It is obvious that 11...exf3 helps White's development, and is not worth the extra pawn.

The immediate counter in the centre 11...e5 has lost its former popularity. After 12 d5 ♘d4 13 hxg6 hxg6 14 fxe4 (14 ♗h6 is met by the jab 14...e3, slowing down the development of the attack) White has the better chances.

12 ♖xh5

If the capture on h5 is to be postponed, then the most obvious idea is the exchange of the dark-squared bishops. 12 ♗h6 at once leaves the d4-pawn without protection, so the line 12 d5 ♘e5 13 ♗h6 has been tested. However, Black's counterplay demonstrated in the game Aleskerov-Sanikidze, World Junior Ch, Istanbul 2005

retired this continuation, perhaps only for the time being: 13...♘ec4 (this must be played at once, before the bishops are exchanged and the d4-square becomes available to the queen) 14 ♕g5 ♖f7 15 ♖h4 ♕d6 16 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 17 ♕xh5 ♗d7 18 ♖xe4 ♕b4 (once the queen makes it to this square, it can create very dangerous threats) 19 ♖d2 ♕c5 20 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 21 ♖dd4 ♘d6 22 ♖f4 ♘f5 and the exchange had to be given up, after all.

12...♗f5 *(D)*

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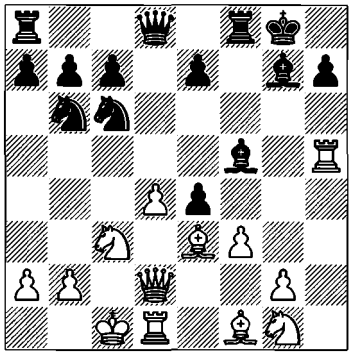

13 ♖g5

This move appears the most flexible: as the attack along the h-file has slowed down, the rook is switched to exert pressure along the g-file, at the same time evading a possible attack. Now the threat is fxe4.

Instead, 13 ♗h6 is again met with 13...♕xd4 and the exchange-grab 14 ♕xd4 ♗xd4 15 ♗xf8 is bad because after 15...♖xf8, the threats of ...♗e3+ and ...♗xg1 cannot both be met. The preliminary 13 d5 runs into the zwischenzug 13...♗g6, and in the line 14 ♖h3 ♘e5 15 fxe4 ♘ec4 16 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 17 ♕e2 ♘xe3 18 ♕xe3 c6 the white king is as uncomfortable as his black counterpart.

13...♗g6

Taking the pawn would speed up the knight's arrival onto the battlefield; this is also an indirect defence against 14 fxe4, as the f1-bishop would again be exposed to attack.

14 ♗e2

White is forced to waste a tempo, and Black carries out the standard counter in the centre.

14...e5 15 d5 ♘d4

Here Black can already snatch a pawn with 15...exf3, but after 16 ♘xf3 ♘d4, White can play 17 ♘h4, after which his initiative fully compensates for the loss; on the other hand, nothing is achieved with 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe2+ 18 ♕xe2 ♖e8 19 ♘xg6 ♕xg5 20 ♗xg5 ♖xe2 21 ♘xe2 hxg6 and the endgame is level.

16 fxe4 c6 17 dxc6

17 ♘f3 has been tested as well, but Black achieves a fully adequate game: 17...♗f6 18 ♖g3 ♘xe2+ 19 ♕xe2 cxd5, although now instead of 20 exd5 ♖c8 (Moiseenko-Li Chao, Moscow 2007), White could have tried 20 ♘xd5 or 20 ♗xb6.

17...♘xc6

The recapture with the pawn would open one file opposite the enemy king but close the other one, whereas the c-file looks more promising with the current piece configuration. Now the queen exchange would result in approximate equality, but White hopes for more.

18 ♕e1 ♕f6 *(D)*

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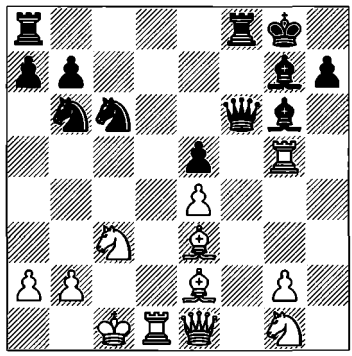

The evaluation of this position is critical for the assessment of the plan of counterplay initiated with ...f5.

While for the moment neither of the black bishops takes an active part in the events, they cement Black's defence and secure a powerful outpost for the knight on d4; an exchange on this square would blast open the centre for the bishops and lead to a powerful attack on the white king. Even without the bishops, Black has the advantage in the number of combat units on the queenside. It is not clear if the white rook is attacking or is stuck on g5.

The conclusion must be that Black's chances are at least no worse. Now for the first time there is a real threat of ...♗h6 (earlier it would have been refuted with ♖xg6+), which should have been met by retreating the rook or moving the bishop to h5 immediately.

19 ♕g3?!

The queen's kingside sortie is a risky decision.

19...♘d4 20 ♗h5

The situation urgently called for the prophylactic 20 ♔b1. After the text-move, the rook finds itself on an unprotected square, which gives Black an important tempo.

20...♗xh5 21 ♖xh5 ♖ac8 22 ♔b1?

After 22 ♗h6 ♕g6 23 ♕xg6 hxg6 24 ♗xg7 gxh5 25 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 White still can offer resistance, although Black already has a palpable advantage in the endgame.

22...♖xc3 *(D)*

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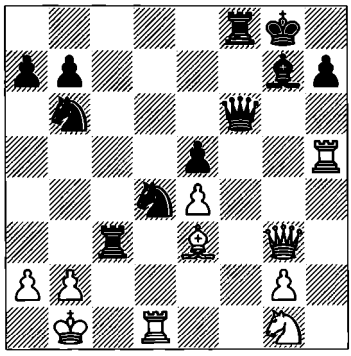


Somewhat unexpected, yet quite logical – the white king's defenders are nowhere to be seen.

23 bxc3 ♘a4 24 ♗xd4

The threat was ...♕b6+. The other attempt to cover that square, 24 ♖h6, fails to 24...♘xc3+ 25 ♔c1 ♘ce2+.

24...exd4 25 ♔c2

The line 25 cxd4 ♕b6+ 26 ♕b3+ ♕xb3+ 27 axb3 ♘c3+ 28 ♔c2 ♘xd1 29 ♔xd1 ♖f1+ leaves White a piece down, as does 25 ♕d3 ♕b6+ 26 ♖b5 ♕xb5+ 27 ♕xb5 ♘xc3+. The king's attempt to flee fares no better.

25...♕f7

More incisive was 25...♕b6 26 ♖b1 ♖f2+ 27 ♕xf2 d3+, but in such a position enough is as good as a feast.

26 ♖xd4

26 ♖d5 ♘xc3 allows White to make a few moves more than in the game.

26...♕xa2+ 27 ♔d3 ♕b1+ 28 ♔d2 ♕b2+ 0-1

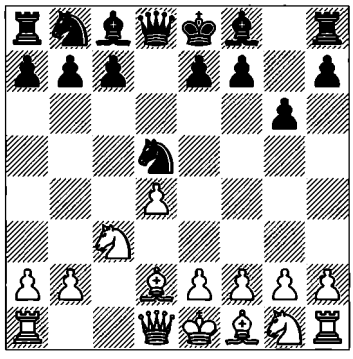
Game 6 [D85]

Alexander Lastin – Valeri Yandemirov

Voronezh 2007

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♗d2 *(D)*

B



This seemingly passive move pursues the concrete goal of preparing to recapture on c3 with the bishop in order to neutralize its powerful adversary on g7. Meanwhile White intends e4, setting up the broad centre typical of the Exchange Variation but without the structural liabilities. Should Black decline the offer to exchange and instead retreat the knight, White reaches standard positions with a tempo lost on the bishop move; then the question is how this tempo affects the assessment of the resulting situation. In this respect, the line is similar to the one seen in the previous game, where although White didn't lose a tempo with this bishop, the move f3 was of questionable usefulness, and indeed a lost tempo if White played a subsequent f4.

The 5 ♗d2 line is old, but it has gained some popularity in the last few years.

5...♗g7

We should note that 5...♗f5? fails to prevent the advance: 6 e4 ♘xc3 7 ♗xc3 ♗xe4?? 8 d5 and 9 ♕a4+.

The voluntary retreat 5...♘b6 is the main alternative, by which Black tries to prevent

White from reaching the most favourable set-up – the advance e4 coupled with the fairly secure protection of the d4-pawn with ♗e3. The common continuation then is 6 ♗g5 and Black can gear up for ...c5 according to his taste; he can:

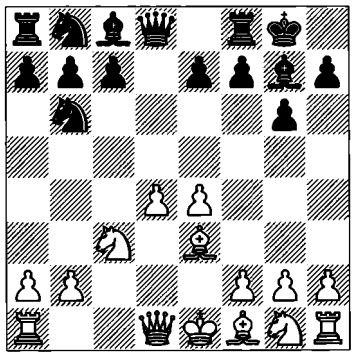
- first drive the bishop away to h4 or even g3;
- push ...c5 before castling, so that the e7-pawn is protected, and after dxc5 go into the endgame – exchange on c3, then the knight jumps from b6 to a4;
- play ...c5 after castling and retreat the knight to d7, keeping the queens on the board.

Of interest is another set-up where White aims to forestall ...c5: 6 ♘f3 ♗g7 7 ♖c1 ♘c6 (7...0-0 allows White to develop the bishop to an active post: 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 g5 10 ♗g3 c5 11 d5 e6 12 d6, Morozevich-Shirov, Pamplona 2006) 8 e3 (in reply to 8 ♗f4 Sashikiran has successfully tested 8...♘xd4 9 ♘xd4 e5) 8...e5 9 ♗b5 0-0 10 ♗xc6 exd4 11 ♘xd4 bxc6 and the open lines and diagonals are quite adequate compensation for the pawn weaknesses, Dreev-Kurnosov, European Ch, Dresden 2007.

6 e4 ♘xc3

The most common move is 6...♘b6. After the natural 7 ♗e3 0-0 *(D)* (delaying castling by 7...♘c6 gives White the option of 8 d5 ♘e5 9 f4 ♘g4 10 ♗b5+ ♗d7 11 ♕xg4 ♗xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♗xb5 13 ♗d4 or transposition to line 'b2' after 8 ♗b5 0-0) White has several ways to treat the resulting position:

W



a) 8 ♗e2 bears close comparison with line 'b' in which White first provokes ...a6. After 8...♘c6 White has:

a1) 9 ♘f3 ♗g4 10 d5 (having allowed the enemy bishop on g4, White doesn't have sufficient resources to maintain the pawn on d4 and must advance it) 10...♗xf3 11 gxf3 ♘a5 12 ♗d4 ♕d6 is viable for Black.

a2) 9 d5 ♘e5 10 ♗d4 is well met with 10...c5 11 ♗xc5 ♘ec4 12 ♕b3 ♘xb2. Naturally, with the pawn on a6 the b6-knight would hang, so this solution isn't available to Black in line 'b'.

b) The somewhat abstract bishop sortie 8 ♗b5 *(D)* aims to provoke ...a6, and then return to e2, claiming the inclusion to favour White, as it weakens the b6-square, and we have already seen in line 'a' how this can make a vital difference if Black opts for the natural moves. However, it is not so easy to find a useful reply that doesn't to some extent justify the bishop's position on b5:

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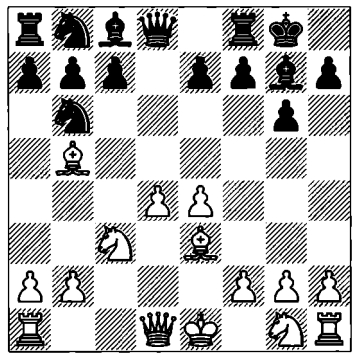


b1) 8...♗d7 interferes with the pressure on the pawn on d4, and White again retreats the bishop to e2.

b2) 8...♘c6 allows White to defend d4 with 9 ♘ge2 without having to fear the pin that we saw in line 'a1'; e.g., 9...♗d7 10 0-0 a6 11 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 12 d5 ♗d7, Korotylev-Timofeev, Kazan 2005. Instead, 9 ♗xc6 spoils Black's pawn-structure, but at the cost of opening for him the b-file and an important diagonal for the light-squared bishop.

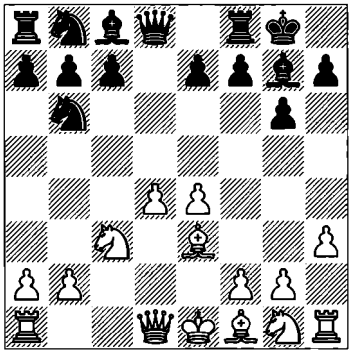
b3) 8...♗e6 attempts to create counterplay against c4.

b4) 8...f5 is the principal method of undermining the white centre and should be compared with 'b5'.

b5) When Black does opt for 8...a6 9 ♗e2, another typical plan of counterplay is preferred today: 9...f5 with the possible continuation 10 exf5 ♗xf5 11 ♕b3+ ♔h8 12 ♘f3 ♘c6 13 d5 ♘e5 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5.

c) 8 h3 *(D)*.

B

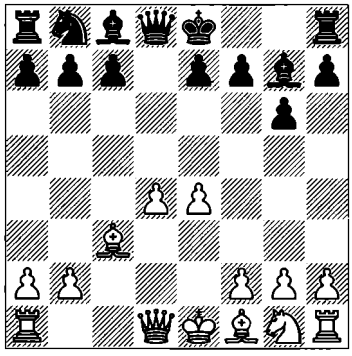


As mentioned in the notes to the previous game, such positions with an extra tempo for White are in his favour; naturally, the additional move grants Black more options in this case. Here, too, White can successfully withstand the piece pressure on the d4-pawn, so Black must undermine the centre with a pawn-thrust. Both methods can be encountered: 8...e5 9 ♘f3 exd4 10 ♗xd4, striving for an edge, and 8...f5 9 exf5 ♗xf5 10 ♘f3 ♘c6 11 ♕b3+ ♔h8 12 d5 ♘e5 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 – we mentioned a similar position earlier. Although the above lines are not the only ones, they are the most typical.

d) 8 f4 transposes to the note to White's 8th move in Game 5.

7 ♗xc3 *(D)*

B



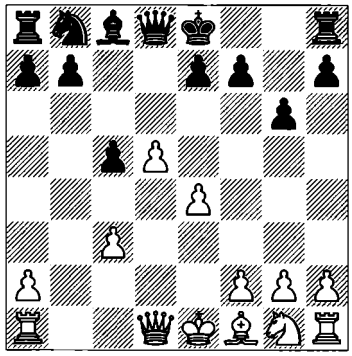
It was for the sake of this recapture that White initiated the bishop manoeuvre. Now the bishop effectively neutralizes its opposite number on g7, and in the likely case of the exchange of these bishops, Black is saddled with dark-squared holes around his king. While these weaknesses may not be terminal, considering the forces remaining on the board, they require Black's constant attention.

7...c5

Black may postpone the counterblow in the centre until his development is complete; e.g., 7...0-0 8 ♗c4 ♘d7 9 ♘e2 c5 10 d5 ♘e5 11 ♗b3 e6 12 0-0 c4 13 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 ♕d4+ ♕f6 16 ♕xc4 exd5 17 exd5 ♕xb2, Grishchuk-Krasenkow, European Clubs Cup, Saint Vincent 2005, although White's position is the more pleasant. The immediate blow in the centre also leads to positions that are more pleasant for White.

8 d5 ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 *(D)*

B



A new pawn configuration has arisen where White has a pawn more in the centre, which in the middlegame is of more consequence than Black's queenside majority. The resulting pawn-chain leaves the c8-bishop with almost no place to go. Black must strive to restrict the freedom of the enemy soldiers and determine the final formation; this can be achieved by preparing ...e6. Then the attempt to reinforce the d-pawn by c4 renders White's own bishop too passive, and ...e5 with the idea of blockade becomes an attractive option. However, if White ends up recapturing with his bishop on d5, he will find the extra support provided by the c4-pawn quite handy. When castling kingside, Black must remember that his dark squares are weak and that ...e6 aggravates this weakness further still, so he must constantly watch out for the h4-h5 attack.

9...0-0

Also seen is 9...♕a5, trying to organize some action on the queenside, but then the queen is farther away from the king, and Black is left with fewer defensive resources on the other side of the board.

10 ♖b1

This move is inspired by the analogous manoeuvre from the ♖b1 Exchange Variation. The rook evades a possible attack and sets its sights on the b7-pawn. After 10 ♘f3 Black achieved equality in Karpov-Timofeev, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2007: 10...e6 11 ♗c4 b5 12 ♗xb5 ♕a5 13 ♗c4 ♕xc3+ 14 ♘d2 ♗a6 15 ♖c1 ♕e5.

10...e6

Black decides to clarify the situation at once; he is OK with the exchange of the b7-pawn for the one on a2 that would now occur in the case of 11 dxe6 ♗xe6 12 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 13 ♖xb7 ♗xa2. Speaking formally, the change in the pawn-structure favours White: he has now one pawn-island fewer whereas Black has one more, although whether you consider the a7-pawn a passed pawn or a weakness depends on your reserve of optimism. In any case, Black is better developed (the a8-rook is already in the ideal place to support the advance of its ward). White prefers to reply in a classical fashion.

11 ♗c4 ♕f6

The sortie 11...♕g5 is also possible. In reply to the probable 12 ♔f1, Black can drop the queen back to f6, but it isn't wholly clear who benefits more from Black's little zwischenzug. The position of the king on f1 has its advantages – in some lines the pawns on c3 and e4 can be sacrificed without fearing a check, and the loss of castling is of little consequence if the rook can be activated along the h-file after h4-h5.

12 ♘e2 ♘d7 *(D)*

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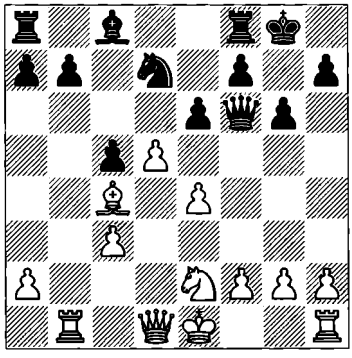

The weakness on e6 that appears after this move promises little joy, but this is the lesser evil. The alternatives are taking on d5, when the bishop takes the pawn's place, or closing the position with ...e5, which in the given configuration is to White's advantage, as he still has the diagonal for the bishop and the c4-square for the knight.

13 dxe6 fxe6 14 0-0 ♘b6 15 ♗b3 ♕e5

Why not 15...c4 at once? Because of 16 ♗c2 e5 17 a4, when it is still hard to complete development. White threatens a5, while the bishop must guard b7, and the c4-pawn is indirectly under attack as well, because of the possible ♕d5+. Denying the white queen that option by means of ...♖f8-d8 is undesirable, as that square is better suited for the a8-rook. That's why Black begins by transferring his queen with gain of tempo to c7, where it protects both pawns. However, the white queen also finds an active post.

16 ♕d3 ♕c7 17 ♕e3 c4 18 ♗c2 e5 *(D)*

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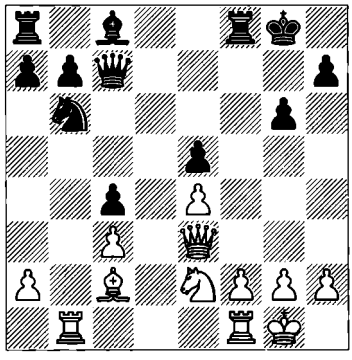

The initial impression is that Black is doing very well – the bishop has an open diagonal to operate on, while its opposite number has almost no moves; also, the e5-pawn restricts the enemy knight. However, this is all outweighed by the weak defence of the royal residence, and the threats that arise after f4 give White a certain advantage.

19 ♕g5

There were other interesting, and probably stronger, continuations – 19 a4, 19 ♖b5 or 19 f4 at once. The text-move also looks attractive – the queen is poised for assault, controlling a complex of weak squares and removing itself from its position on the same diagonal as the king, in order to exclude the possibility of the exchange after ...♕c5 in certain variations. White threatens the h4-h5 raid, while also setting his sights on the e5-pawn. Nevertheless, White still needs to bring up reinforcements if his attack is to carry much weight.

19...♘d7

It would be better to let the bishop out first, except that on e6 it would come under attack after the planned f4. However, the simple 19...♗d7 looks good – the mobilization nears completion, and the squares a4 and b5 are placed under control. The lines 20 f4 ♖ae8 21 fxe5 (21 f5!?) 21...♖xf1+ 22 ♖xf1 ♕xe5 and 20 h4 ♖f7 21 h5 ♖e8 22 hxg6 hxg6 23 ♕xg6+ ♖g7 24 ♕h6 ♕c5, with substantial compensation for the pawn, both look quite acceptable for Black. Instead Black prefers to reinforce the point e5 and develop the bishop to b7; if he manages both, he will have nothing to complain about.

20 ♖bd1 *(D)*

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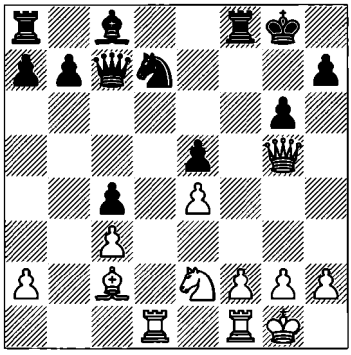


20...b6

20...♘f6 may be good, to meet 21 f4 with 21...♕b6+ and 22...♘g4; then 21 ♖d2 secures White control of the d-file for a while, and he could attempt to take advantage of the opportunity to invade on d6.

21 f4

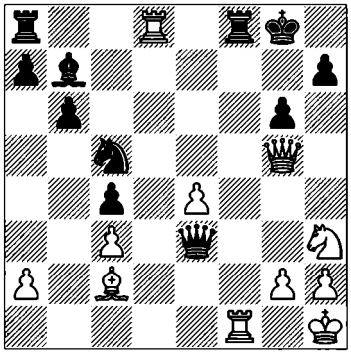
It seems that White is in a hurry to force the pace; it was a good idea to loosen Black's defensive line with an advance of the h-pawn first.

21...♕c5+ 22 ♔h1 exf4 23 ♖d5 ♕e3 24 ♘xf4

Nothing scary is to be seen after 24...♕xc3 25 ♖f5 ♗b7 26 ♘xg6 ♖xf5 and now 27 ♘e7++ ♔h8 28 ♘xf5 ♖f8 or 27 ♕xf5 hxg6 28 ♕xd7 ♕xc2 29 ♕f7+ ♔h8 30 ♕xb7 ♖d8. However, the pin on the knight looks so firm that Black decided to go for more and overlooked something.

24...♘c5? 25 ♖d8 ♗b7 26 ♘h3! *(D)*

B



And here is the surprise, ending the game at once: Black's losses are too heavy. The following moves were not really necessary.

26...♖axd8 27 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 28 ♕xe3 ♖f1+ 29 ♘g1 ♗c8 30 h3 ♖a1 31 ♔h2 ♖xa2 32 ♗d1 a5 33 ♕d4 ♗e6 34 ♘f3 1-0

Game 7 [D85]

Pierre Yves Toulzac – Valentin Bogdanov

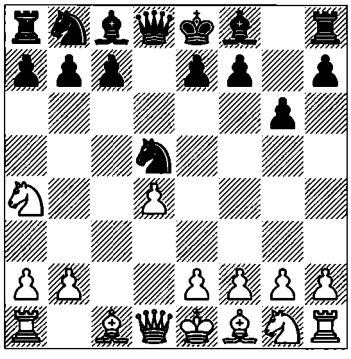
Malakoff 2007

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3

Our topic in this game is the idea of White exchanging on d5 followed by the odd-looking move ♘a4. In the game, this occurs after the preliminary 4 ♘f3 ♗g7, but naturally we should also examine the immediate 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♘a4 *(D)*.

When seen for the first time, this continuation produces much the same impression as 1 a4 or 1 h4; that is, at best it looks like a provocation. One can imagine what a fine target of

B



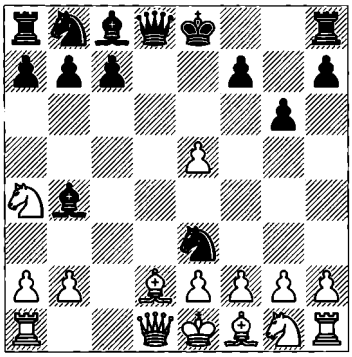
sarcasm this move would have made in the days of good old Dr Tarrasch. The basic opening laws are being violated – the knight spends another tempo ... on withdrawing from the centre. However, in the past hundred years the assessment criteria have become more liberal and concrete. How can the exchange on c3 be avoided? Withdrawing from c3 is one possible answer. But withdrawing where? Not to e4 – White's plans call for that square to be reserved for a pawn. That leaves us with a4 – and at least there it does something useful by controlling the c5-square.

Of course, this continuation does not purport to refute the Grünfeld Defence; on the other hand, Black's attempts at counter-refutation, which this knight leap initially provoked, met with little success, and today this variation has the reputation of being quite playable.

Black's sharpest response is 5...e5. Now 6 e4 ♘f6 promises little, so White normally continues 6 dxe5. Here two continuations have been tested:

a) 6...♗b4+ 7 ♗d2 ♘e3 *(D).*

W



This tactical trick is the idea behind Black's counterplay. Now in reply to 8 ♕c1 the simple 8...♗xd2+ 9 ♕xd2 ♕xd2+ 10 ♔xd2 ♘c4+ is good enough, so 8 fxe3 ♗xd2+ 9 ♕xd2 (9 ♔f2 ♘c6 10 ♘f3 ♗b4 offers White no advantage) 9...♕h4+ 10 g3 ♕xa4 is the main line. In the stem game for the ♘a4 idea, the system's author Nadanian chose 11 ♕d4 ♕a5+ 12 b4, but later it was discovered that after 12...♕a3 Black stands well. Today the plan of 11 ♗g2 followed by ♕c3, 0-0 and play on the weak dark squares and half-open f-file is preferred. The tripled pawns on the e-file can hardly constitute a material advantage, but White's initiative persists, and this demands particularly accurate play from his opponent.

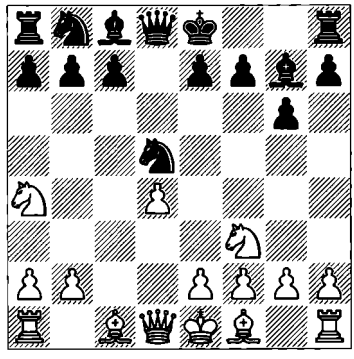
b) With 6...♘c6 Black puts off winning back the pawn and aims at rapid development, setting his sights on the insufficiently protected c2-square. One possible course of events is 7 ♘f3 ♘db4 8 ♗g5 ♕xd1+ 9 ♔xd1 ♗e6 10 ♘c3 ♗g7 11 a3 ♘d5 12 e4 ♘xc3+ 13 bxc3 ♘xe5 with a roughly even game. If White forestalls the leap to b4 and returns the pawn at once, at the same time depriving Black of the right to castle, his achievements are still rather modest: 7 a3 ♘xe5 8 e4 ♘b6 9 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 10 ♗g5+ ♗e7 11 0-0-0+ ♔e8 12 ♗f4 ♗d6, Bu Xiangzhi-Sashikiran, Dos Hermanas (Internet Knockout) 2005.

Let us suppose that Black seeks a creative response. Can he also spend a tempo on moving the knight twice, in order to prevent e4? Indeed he can, and the reply 5...♘f6 is quite solid. Then building the ideal centre cannot be secured by natural means, so White usually transposes into variations with the fianchetto of the light-squared bishop or posts the dark-squared one on f4, acquiescing to a less ambitious formation in the centre for the time being: 6 ♘f3 ♗g7 7 ♗f4 ♘bd7 8 h3 0-0 9 e3 c5, Dao Thien Hai-Wang Yue, Doha (rapid) 2006.

Finally, 5...♗g7 usually transposes into the position in the game; there have been few attempts to develop the knight to e2.

4...♗g7 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 ♘a4 *(D)*

B



6...0-0

White's move-order has avoided the lines with ...e5, at the cost of giving Black 6...♗f5 as an extra option. With the knight still on g1, the natural reaction would be f3, but here White must take steps to deal with the knight leap to

b4. Earlier, the continuation 7 ♘c5 b6 8 e4 bxc5 9 exf5 cxd4 was the subject of practical tests; today the reply is 7 ♘h4 with an amusing knight symmetry.

7 e4 ♘b6

White will now generally place his bishops on e2 and e3, but there are some subtleties relating to the order in which he makes these moves.

8 ♗e2

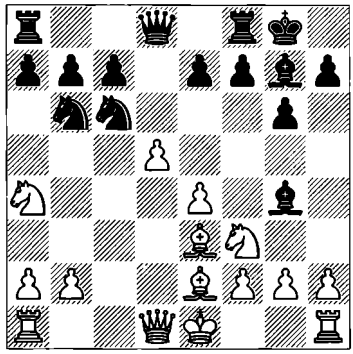
By developing this bishop first, White avoids the immediate ...c5 that is possible, though hardly sensible, in case of 8 ♗e3, i.e., 8...♘xa4 9 ♕xa4 c5. This line doesn't enjoy a particularly great reputation, since after 10 ♖d1 it is not easy for Black to neutralize the activity of White's pieces. 8 ♗e3 also gives White an additional possibility after 8...♗g4, namely 9 ♘c5 (avoiding yet another version of the exchange on a4 with a subsequent ...c5; 9 ♗e2 obviously transposes to the main game), although this has its pluses from Black's point of view as well: 9...♘c6 10 ♘xb7 ♕c8 11 ♗a6 ♘b4. With the continuation in the game, the order in which the bishops are developed has no importance.

8...♗g4 9 ♗e3 ♘c6

Here the already mentioned idea of 9...♘xa4 10 ♕xa4 c5 11 ♖d1 cxd4 is sounder, as simplification offers Black better reasons to hope for equality after both 12 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 13 ♖xd4 ♕b6 and 12 ♘xd4 ♗xe2. The text-move leads to another typical Grünfeld set-up.

10 d5 *(D)*

B



10...♗xf3

The attempt to exchange the b-pawns makes little sense: 10...♘xa4?! 11 ♕xa4 ♗xb2 12 ♖b1 ♗c3+ 13 ♔f1 ♘b8 (13...♗xf3?! 14 ♗xf3 ♘e5? loses a piece to 15 ♕a3) 14 ♕b3 and 15 ♕xb7. However, the simplifying 10...♘e5 11 ♘xb6 axb6 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe2 13 ♕xe2 ♗xe5 is solid enough.

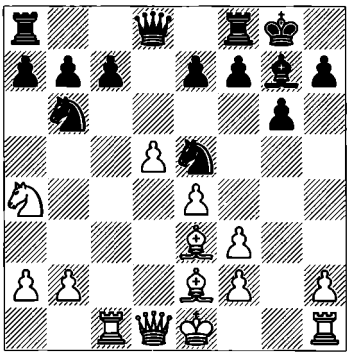
11 gxf3 ♘e5

Although such play leads to complex positions, it is a risky strategy. White has a strong centre and two bishops, which promises an advantage in many endgames. The price is a slight defect in the pawn-structure that poses the problem of choosing a place of residence for the white king. Still, the potentially weak h-pawn can be thrown into the assault by h4-h5, and the king's freedom to choose his residence provides considerable flexibility in meeting Black's plans. Black's top priority is sapping the d5-pawn, which is not easy to arrange.

Although a retreat at the cost of development is unpleasant, 11...♘b8 deserved consideration, with the possible sequel 12 ♕b3 ♘xa4 13 ♕xa4 c6 14 0-0-0 cxd5 15 ♖xd5 ♕c7+ 16 ♔b1 ♘c6.

12 ♖c1 *(D)*

B



12...c6?

A thoughtless move, as Black now simply loses a pawn. Preferable was 12...♘ed7 13 ♘c3 c6 14 dxc6 bxc6 15 f4 ♕b8 16 h4 ♖d8, Egiazarian-Neverov, Minsk 1998, even though here too, White has the better chances.

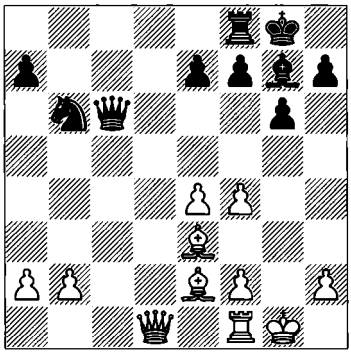
13 f4 ♘ed7 14 dxc6 bxc6 15 ♖xc6 ♖c8

Maintaining the material parity is even worse: after 15...♘xa4 16 ♕xa4 ♗xb2 17 0-0 White's dominance will quickly bring him new acquisitions. Black, a pawn down, shifts into difficult defence and for a start exchanges off the active white rook.

16 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 17 0-0 ♕c6 18 ♘xb6 ♘xb6 *(D)*

Time to sum up the results: they are sad for Black – there is no compensation for the pawn.

W



Were his forces active, the somewhat open position of the enemy king might give him a glimmer of a hope, but even that is missing. On his last move Black had to choose which of the remaining minor pieces should be allotted more scope. The capture on b6 by the pawn would keep some options for the knight open, but then White would block the bishop with e5. Now this advance is inexpedient, as it would allow the knight to d5, so the bishop is not 'bad' for the time being. However, after White's b3 it will be shut out of the fight.

19 ♕b1 e5

In order to thin out the pawn-formation around the enemy king and provide a future for his own bishop. If 19...♘a4, then 20 e5.

20 ♖c1 ♕f6

Now Black is forced to recapture on e5 with the queen, and the transfer of the bishop to the same diagonal as the h2-pawn has to be postponed. However, Black didn't like 20...♕e6 because of 21 f5 and both black minor pieces would have been inactive for some time.

21 fxe5 ♕xe5 22 b3 ♕e7 23 ♗f3

White does not hurry. He had a good choice of active continuations; for example, 23 f4 or 23 a4. At the moment he has the more active pieces in addition to the extra pawn; should Black manage to neutralize this factor, his hopes for salvation would increase.

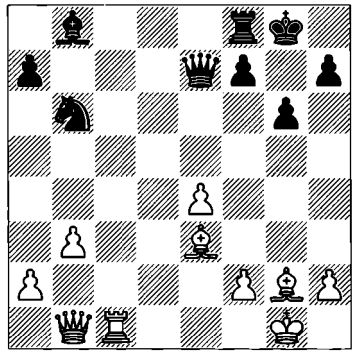
23...♗e5 24 ♗g2 ♗b8 *(D)*

Black tries to worry White with ideas of the queen invading on h2, even though this isn't much of a threat.

25 ♗c5 ♗d6 26 ♗xd6

This exchange serves no purpose. The essential condition of the advantage of two bishops consists first of all of the fact that there are two of them. Now the dark squares are weakened.

W



Still, Black's achievement is of a rather symbolic nature, as White's position remains won.

26...♕xd6 27 ♖c2

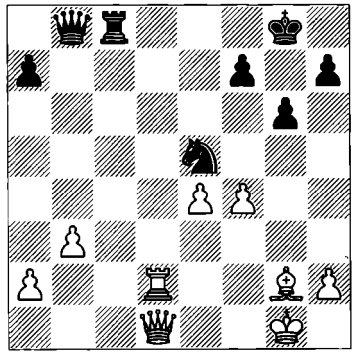
White embarks on a slow regrouping plan; he should have taken care that the enemy knight remained shut out of the game instead. 27 ♖d1 controlling the main transit point d7 suggested itself.

27...♘d7 28 ♕c1 ♘e5 29 ♖d2 ♕b8 30 ♕d1 ♖c8

The regrouping has ended in the complete and absolute control of the d-file, but the value of control over an open line is the highest when that open line is the only one. If your opponent has an open line of his own, then you should produce the proof that yours is more important.

31 f4 *(D)*

B



The pawns relocate to dark squares, to widen the bishop's scope of activity. This is a sensible decision with one drawback – the area around the king is weakened still more.

31...♘c6 32 e5 ♘e7 33 ♗h3? ♕b6+ 34 ♔g2 ♖c3 35 ♖d3 ♕c6+

White's last few moves were not best (the bishop on h3 is more of a hindrance than a

workhorse, and it was not necessary to allow, even briefly, a pin on the rook), and Black has acquired a serious initiative.

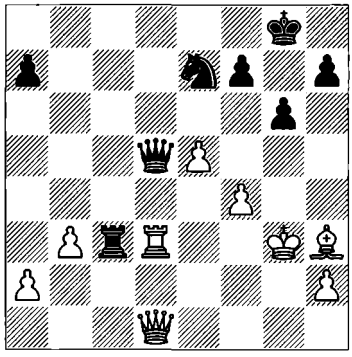
36 ♔g3?

36 ♖f3 was mandatory, even though the continuation 36...♕e4 37 ♔f2 ♖c2+ 38 ♔g1 looks dangerous. White should hold the game, as he will play for a perpetual check on the squares d8, f6 and h4, in case Black attempts to activate the knight.

36...♖c1?

Black misses an opportunity to demonstrate a classic example of a double pin by 36...♕d5 *(D)*.

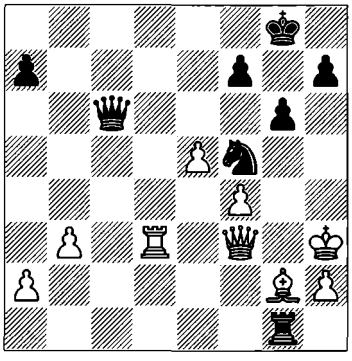
W



The only reply, 37 ♗f1, is met by 37...♘f5+ 38 ♔h3 ♕e6 39 ♕f3 (giving up the exchange with 39 ♔g2 ♘e3+ offers as few prospects of salvation) 39...♘e3+ with a multitude of threats that White would be hard pressed to meet; for example, 40 ♔g3 ♘xf1+ 41 ♕xf1 ♕a6; 40 ♔h4 ♕e7+ 41 ♔g3 (41 ♔h3 ♖xd3 42 ♗xd3 ♕d7+) 41...♘f5+ 42 ♔f2 ♕c5+ 43 ♔e1 ♖c1+ 44 ♖d1 ♖c2; or 40 f5 ♕xe5 – only this line gives a glimmer of hope.

37 ♕f3 ♖g1+ 38 ♗g2? ♘f5+ 39 ♔h3 *(D)*

B



39...♕c8?

Having spent the last few seconds before the time-control and found nothing decisive, Black forgets about the presence of the mighty bishop on the long diagonal and makes a horrible move. 39...♕c2?, hoping for 40 e6? ♖xg2 41 ♖d8+ ♔g7 42 ♕xg2 ♕c3+, also fails to win, as White interpolates 40 ♖c3, and if the queen goes to b2, it loses the chance to check along the third rank. Nevertheless, 39...♕e6 40 ♕d5 ♘d4+ 41 ♕xe6 ♘xe6 42 ♖f3 g5 was good, but Black failed to find this at the board and decided to create a threat from another square, overlooking White's obvious reply.

40 ♕a8

Black is back in the hole, except it is even deeper now. The unfortunate position of the white king is his only chance.

40...♕xa8 41 ♗xa8 ♖f1 42 ♖d7 ♖xf4 43 ♖xa7 g5?! *(D)*

The wrong pawn. The rook endgame offered real chances of salvation: 43...h5 44 ♖a4 ♖f2 45 ♗e4 g5 46 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 47 ♖a5 ♖f3+ 48 ♔g2 ♖c3 49 e6 fxe6 50 ♖xg5+ ♔f7.

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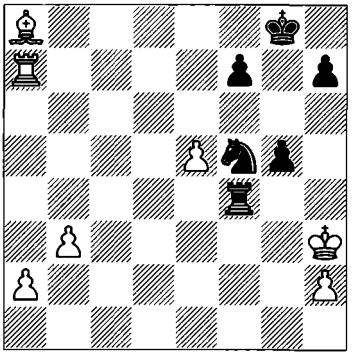


44 ♖a4 ♖f2 45 ♖g4 h6 46 ♖g2

The rook comes to the rescue in time, picking up a pawn along the way. Now the pair of passed pawns and the strong bishop make White's technical task quite feasible.

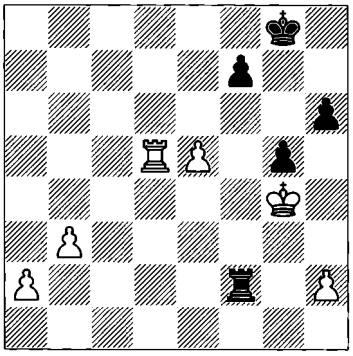
46...♖f1 47 ♗e4 ♘d4 48 ♖d2 ♘e6 49 ♗d5

For the sake of keeping the e5-pawn, White agrees to the exchange of the minor pieces – and wrongly so. With the bishop present the passed pawns would run at a much faster pace.

49...♘f4+ 50 ♔g4 ♘xd5 51 ♖xd5 ♖f2 *(D)*

And here is the rook endgame, along with its inherent drawish traditions. White still has a connected pair of candidates for joint promotion, who will advance a step at a time while

W



Black is busy acquiring the same. In this sort of race, the decisive factor is how far the pawns are advanced. The only other important variable is the position of the king facing the enemy foot-soldiers – either he will manage to slow down their advance or, which is more likely, it will prove a welcome target for their fire and present Black with the much-needed tempi.

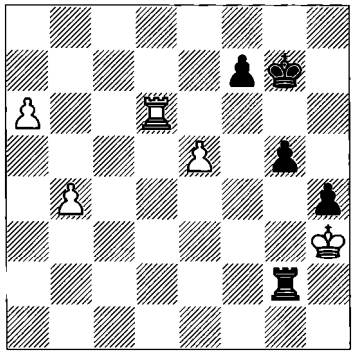
52 a4 ♖xh2 53 a5 ♖g2+ 54 ♔f3 ♖a2 55 b4 ♔g7 56 ♖d6?!

56 ♖d7 or 56 ♔e4 offers better chances of victory.

56...h5 57 a6 h4 58 ♔g4 ♖g2+ 59 ♔h3 *(D)*

Insufficient was 59 ♔f5 h3 60 ♖d1 ♖a2 61 b5 ♖a5 with mutual extermination.

B



59...♖g3+

59...♖b2 blocks the king's way forward because of the threat of taking with check on b4 and provokes an advance of the a-pawn, after which that pawn would for some time be left without the support of its neighbour and thus tie down the rook to its defence: 60 ♖d8 ♖b3+ 61 ♔g2 ♖b2+ 62 ♔g1 ♖b1+ 63 ♔f2 ♖b2+ 64 ♔e3 ♖a2 65 b5 h3 or 60 a7 ♖b3+ 61 ♔g2 ♖b2+ 62 ♔f3 ♖a2 63 ♖d7 h3. This is probably a more reliable way to hold the draw.

60 ♔h2 ♖a3 61 b5 ♖a5 62 ♖d8

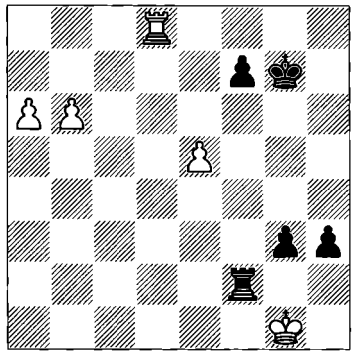
The same reply would follow after 62 ♖d7, with this independent line: 62...g4 63 e6 ♖a2+ 64 ♔g1 ♖a1+ 65 ♔g2 h3+ 66 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 67 ♔h2 ♖g2+ 68 ♔h1 ♖a2 69 ♖xf7+ ♔g6 70 ♖f8 ♔g5.

62...g4 63 b6

After 63 ♖d4 ♖xb5 64 ♖xg4+ ♔h6 65 ♖xh4+ ♔g5 66 ♖a4 ♖b8 67 a7 ♖a8 68 ♔g3 ♔f5 69 ♖a5 f6 Black would also manage to save his scalp.

63...♖a2+ 64 ♔g1 ♖a1+ 65 ♔f2 g3+ 66 ♔f3 ♖f1+ 67 ♔g2 ♖f2+ 68 ♔g1 h3 *(D)*

W



A picturesque position, illustrating the superiority of the pawns charging the king. Although it is White's turn to move, it is he who would lose were the enemy passed pair shifted one file to the left. Here, however, the black rook doesn't have enough room, and the players had to light the pipe of peace.

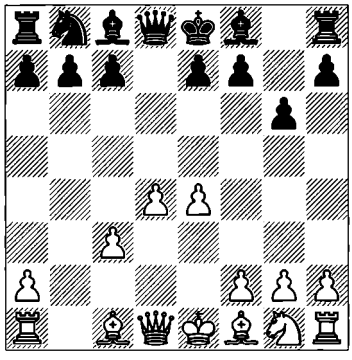
69 ♖d1 ♖g2+ 70 ♔h1 ♖h2+ 71 ♔g1 ½-½

The variations examined in this chapter have the laudable aim of augmenting the effect of the e4 advance, but none are free of obvious drawbacks. Therefore it is only logical that they should not render the opening's state critical. Nevertheless, a fresh, quality idea can secure short-term success and cause the popularity of a particular variation to surge, which is what happens today in the systems from Games 5 and 6.

3 Classical Exchange Variation: White Plays ♘e2

We shall now move on to the Exchange Variation, in which White takes advantage of the opportunity offered to him to seize the centre the most natural way: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 *(D)*.

B

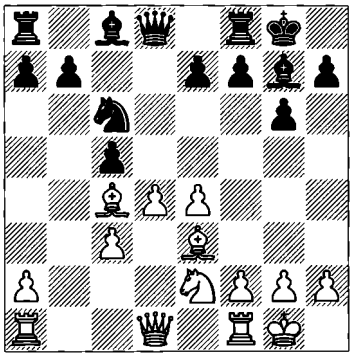


Having allowed White to place the pawns in such a pretty manner, Black has acquired a certain initiative. And indeed he needs this initiative if he is not to be over-run. Black's counterattack against White's centre pawns will limit the choice of squares for the development of the white pieces, whose main concern must be the preservation of the central formation.

The white knight has two reasonable deployments. This chapter discusses lines where the knight is developed to e2, where it is safe from the pin by the bishop on g4, as ...♗g4 can be met by f3. This method of play dominated the theory and practice of the Exchange Grünfeld for a long time, but for a couple of decades, starting in the late 1970s, it went out of fashion, eclipsed by the ♘f3 lines that we examine in the next chapter. In the last decade, new resources and ideas have been found in the ♘e2 systems, while the theory of the ♘f3 lines became increasingly worked out. Today there is an approximate parity between the two set-ups.

After the further moves 6...♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♘e2 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 0-0 *(D)* the critical position arises.

B



Here Black has to pick one of three main lines.

In **Game 8** (Nybäck-Krasenkow) Black chooses to fianchetto his queen's bishop as well, with subsequent play against the white pawns in the centre and operations along the newly-opened c-file.

Game 9 (Aronian-Shirov) is devoted to the traditional main line where Black uses piece-play in the most direct manner to try to break up White's centre or else to create counterplay by using the c4-square. The move ...♗g4 figures prominently in this plan, despite the fact that it can be met by f3, because this move weakens an important diagonal and White's second rank. The spotlight of the subsequent struggle is focused on a well-known variation featuring an exchange sacrifice. Although more than half a century old, this line has recently obtained a new lease of life as it is particularly susceptible to computer analysis, which has uncovered a vast array of new ideas for both sides.

The chapter closes with **Game 10** (Kobaliya-Areshchenko), which examines complex multi-faceted schemes of creating pressure on the white centre. These used to be based on the set-up with 10...♕c7 and ...♖d8, but today they are generally initiated with the development of the bishop to d7.

Game 8 [D88]

Tomi Nybäck – Michal Krasenkow

European Ch, Antalya 2004

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7

The order in which ...c5 and ...♗g7 are played has minimal importance and in most games leads to a transposition. The main exceptions are those cases where White goes with the alternative development of the bishop to b5 or when Black plans to carry out ...c5 much later, after a partial mobilization.

7 ♗c4

7 ♗a3 has long ceased to be feared – the bishop is not posted particularly well there, and it cannot in any case prevent Black from preparing ...c5.

Let's examine 7 ♗b5+ *(D)* in combination with the subsequent development of the knight to e2.

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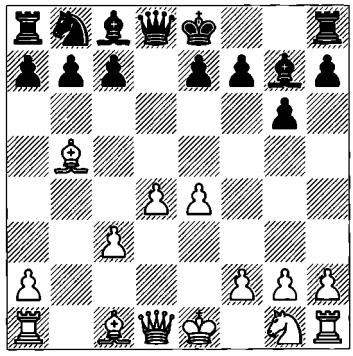

The point of the check is to post the bishop on a4 instead of c4. There is some benefit to this – the bishop avoids a possible attack along the c-file, but there are drawbacks as well – White's control over the c4-square is decreased, and Black gets additional options connected with the appearance, albeit brief, of a pawn on c6. One such option is the counterattack in the centre with ...e5, since the advance of the d4-pawn would now be a dubious idea; another aims at the seizure of space on the queenside by means of ...b5, ...a5, etc. In the classic set-up the counterplay is based on striving to take advantage of the c4-square: 7...c6 8 ♗a4 0-0 9 ♘e2 c5 10 0-0 ♘c6 11 ♗e3 ♘a5. There is an alternative version as well with 7...♗d7, when White usually chooses 8 ♗e2, as the exchange of the bishops on the one hand reinforces the white pawn on d4, as the black bishop is of more use in the attack of this pawn than the white one in its defence, but on the other hand,

the simplifications are good for Black. Having lured the bishop out to d7, White has restricted the choice of the variations available to Black in the system with the knight on f3, but opened to him an additional original option: 8...c5 9 ♘f3 cxd4 10 cxd4 ♗c6 11 ♕d3 f5 12 exf5 ♕a5+ 13 ♗d2 ♕xf5.

We now return to 7 ♗c4 *(D)*:

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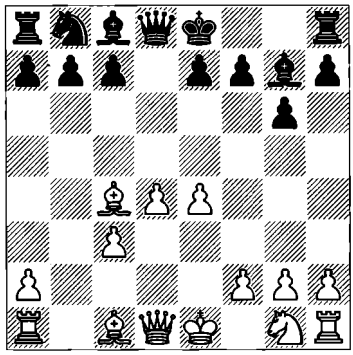

7...c5

Attempts to postpone ...c5 used to have some popularity, but are very rarely seen nowadays:

a) 7...b6 gives White a respite from the work in the centre and he can afford an immediate attack on the enemy king: 8 ♕f3 0-0 9 e5 ♗a6 10 ♗d5 (to take away the c6-square from the knight; 10 ♗b3 at once allows Black a counter-attack with 10...♕d7 and 11...♘c6) 10...c6 11 ♗b3 ♕c7 12 ♘e2 ♗b7 13 h4 c5 14 ♕g3 cxd4 15 cxd4 ♘c6 16 h5 ♘xd4 (Black hopes to obtain three pawns for the piece but there is an elegant refutation) 17 ♘xd4 ♕xe5+ 18 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♗e3 ♖fd8 20 ♖d1 ♗xg2 21 ♖g1 ♗d5 22 hxg6 hxg6 23 ♘c6! ♗xc6 24 ♖xg6+ and 25 ♖xc6, winning, Truskavetsky-Shishkin, Ukrainian Ch, Simferopol 2003.

b) 7...♘c6 leads to analogous positions – 8 ♘e2 b6 9 h4 with the standard initiative.

c) 7...0-0 leads to a transposition of moves in most games; however, now White, too, manages to castle, which deprives Black of two options, although ones that are not very popular. We shall consider them below.

8 ♘e2

As mentioned above, the idea of the whole set-up is based on this development of the knight, not allowing a pin.

8...♘c6 9 ♗e3 *(D)*

9...0-0

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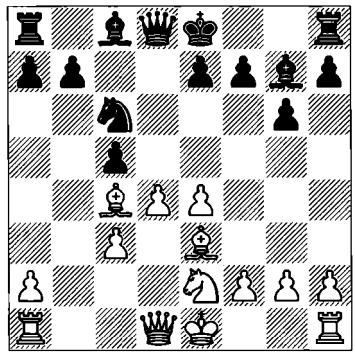

We mentioned above that the fact that White has not yet castled allows Black two (rare) ways to seek counterplay. These both feature the preliminary exchange 9...cxd4 10 cxd4. Then:

a) 10...b5. For those with peaceable inclinations the line 11 ♗xb5 ♕a5+ 12 ♘c3 ♕xc3+ 13 ♗d2 ♕xd4 14 ♗xc6+ ♗d7 15 ♗xa8 ♕xa1 is a popular choice to register the result. However, White has a nice opportunity to fight for the advantage: 11 ♗d5 ♗d7 12 ♖c1 ♖c8 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 15 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 16 d5 ♗d7 17 ♕d2 a5 18 ♖c1, and by combining the attack on the queenside pawns with the transfer of the knight to c6 via d4 White maintains the better chances.

b) 10...♕a5+ *(D)* and now:

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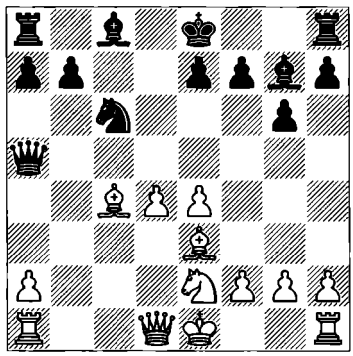


b1) The exchange of queens 11 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 12 ♔xd2, leaving the king in centre, is OK with Black, as he has ways to disturb the harmonious arrangement of the enemy forces.

b2) After 11 ♔f1 White hopes that the exposed position of the black queen will compensate for the forfeit of the right to castle and the associated time loss, and that the h1-rook can be considered developed once the h-pawn advances. However, the plan with the rapid use of

the c4-point with ...♕a3, ...♘a5 and ...♗e6 doesn't look bad for Black.

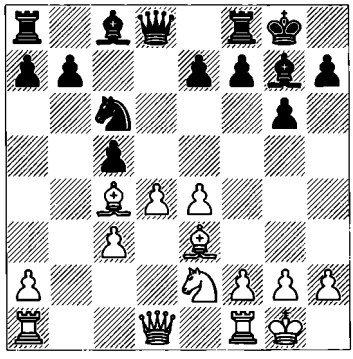
b3) 11 ♗d2 looks more natural. Then:

b31) Black can take comfort in the transfer of the bishop from e3 to c3 (where it is active, in a way, yet less secure) and retreat with 11...♕d8. In the line 12 d5 ♘e5 13 ♗c3 we should note the game Topalov-Mamedyarov, European Team Ch, Khersonisos 2007: 13...♗d7 (the threat of f4 is usually parried with castling; here Black solves this problem with the counterattack along the c-file) 14 ♗b3 ♖c8 15 ♖c1 ♕b6, and here White found nothing better than 16 ♗a4 0-0 with simplifications, and Black didn't have any particular difficulties holding the position. The search for an advantage in the alternative continuation 12 ♗c3 0-0 13 0-0 was frustrated in another Mamedyarov game: 13...♗g4 14 f3 ♗d7 15 ♕d2 a6 16 a4 ♖c8 17 ♖fc1 b5 with a total emancipation, Van Wely-Mamedyarov, Hoogeveen 2007.

b32) 11...♕h5 is more ambitious. White again has a choice between reinforcing the centre and completing his development, viz. 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♗c3, and the immediate 12 d5 ♘e5 13 ♗b5+ ♗d7 14 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7, at which point we should note the game Vaïsser – Vachier-Lagrave, French Ch, Besançon 2006: 15 ♖b1 ♕g4 16 ♘g3 ♕xd1+ 17 ♔xd1 h5 18 f3 b6, when Black's accurate play was enough for equality.

10 0-0 *(D)*

B



10...♘a5

With the system of development chosen by Black, this move is the most accurate. The preliminary exchange 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♘a5 gives White the extra option of 12 ♖c1, although this continuation has few fans.

10...b6 usually leads to a transposition of moves, but whereas earlier Black didn't have to worry about the capture on c5, as his expectations of regaining the pawn and leaving White with two weaknesses were fully justified, now this is a genuine sacrifice, and White can take the pawn, although Black does have a certain compensation after 11 dxc5 ♕c7 12 ♘d4 ♘e5 13 ♘b5 ♕b8.

11 ♗d3 cxd4

The c-pawns could be kept on the board with the immediate 11...b6. In this version the acceptance of the sacrifice by 12 dxc5 bxc5 13 ♗xc5 ♕c7 14 ♗d4 e5 15 ♗e3 ♘c4 typically ends with White, not Black, having to seek equality, which is why White prefers other continuations. One possible formation arises after 12 d5; Black then doesn't allow its neighbour on the c-file to bolster it and plays 12...c4 himself, with the subsequent preparation of the undermining ...e6. Another one received practical tests only recently: 12 ♖c1 e5 (Black tempts his opponent with the chance to obtain a protected passed pawn, but in the blocked position White's pieces would become passive) 13 dxc5 (since the pawn on e5 blocked the bishop's diagonal, White prefers to accept the sacrifice in this situation) 13...♗e6 14 c4 bxc5 15 ♗xc5 ♗h6 16 f4 ♖e8 17 f5 with sharp play, Harikrishna-Sutovsky, Montreal 2007.

12 cxd4 *(D)*

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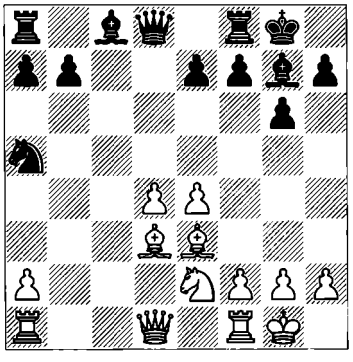

On the board there is a standard formation, also found in other openings. White endeavours to use his superiority in the centre to launch a pawn advance and at the same time readies for the switch to an attack on the enemy king. Either pawn can initiate the advance forward. As a rule, exchanges don't favour the attacking

side, but that doesn't apply in the case of the defender on g7, who can be offered the deserved retirement either from h6 or from d4. The open c-file presupposes a partial or complete elimination of the rooks, since avoiding these exchanges would mean giving up this important file. For the time being Black pursues a policy of containment and decides on the order of ...b6, ...e6, ...♗b7 and ...♕d7/d6. His trump – the two-to-one majority on the queenside – can increase in value as the position is simplified.

12...b6 13 ♕d2

If White begins with 13 ♖c1, then the prophylaxis against the advance of the d-pawn by means of 13...e6 is accepted as the most accurate continuation, while 13...♗b7?! harks back to an old game featuring spectacular tactics: 14 d5 e6 15 dxe6 fxe6 16 ♘f4 ♕d6 17 ♕g4 ♖ae8 18 ♗b5 ♖e7 19 ♖fd1 ♕e5 20 ♗d7 ♕xe4 21 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 22 ♖d4!, Geller-Kapengut, USSR Ch, Leningrad 1971.

13...♗b7 14 ♖ac1 ♕d7 *(D)*

An attempt to save a tempo. The main continuation is 14...e6, when White strives to weaken the walls of the enemy's royal residence with 15 ♗h6 or 15 h4. Here is a fresh example of youth defeating experience: 15 h4 ♕e7 16 h5 ♖fc8 17 e5 (a characteristic moment: by ceding d5 to Black, White gets a temporary respite from the pressure on his centre pawns, fixes the dark squares and concentrates on the kingside attack) 17...♖xc1 18 ♖xc1 ♖c8 19 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 20 ♗g5 ♕c7 21 ♗f6 ♘c6 22 ♕g5 h6 23 ♕c1, Carlsen-Ivanchuk, Linares 2007. The queen's 'long' retreat adds to the assault on g6 the threat to win the pinned knight by ♗b5, d5 and ♘d4.

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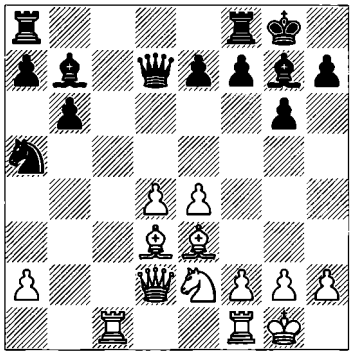

15 ♕b4

White switches to the other flank and plans to harass the enemy queen.

15...♘c6?!

An unfortunate reply; 15...e6 16 ♗b5 ♘c6 17 ♕a4 ♖fc8 is better.

16 ♕a4 ♕d6

The attempt to transpose to the previous note via 16...e6 doesn't work, since White replies 17 d5 at once.

17 ♗b5 ♘a5

This is forced, as 17...♖fc8? loses to 18 e5 ♕d7 19 d5 ♕xd5 20 ♘f4 ♕d7 21 ♖fd1 ♕e8 22 ♘d5, and the threats of multiple captures on c6 with the concluding fork on e7 or of piling up on the pinned knight with ♘b4 cannot be met simultaneously.

18 e5

The advance by the other pawn, 18 d5!?, appears no less attractive.

18...♕d8 19 ♖fd1?! *(D)*

19 ♗d7!, threatening e6, looks logical; for example, 19...♗d5 20 ♘f4 ♗xa2 21 ♗g4 and to save the bishop Black has to return the pawn with 21...♗b3 22 ♕b4 b5, after which the difference in the position of the minor pieces speaks for itself.

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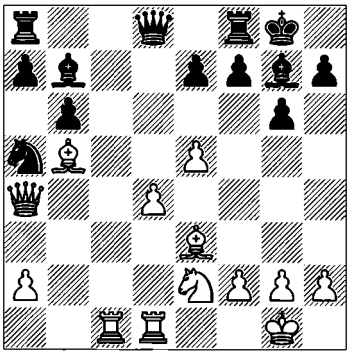

19...a6 20 ♗d3 b5 21 ♕b4 ♗d5 22 ♘f4 ♗c4

The capture of the a2-pawn doesn't lose a piece, but it leaves the bishop stuck on a4: after 22...♗xa2?! 23 ♗e4 ♖b8 (or 23...♖a7) 24 ♖a1 ♗b3 and 25...♗a4, White's superiority in the centre should prove decisive.

23 ♗e4 ♖c8 24 ♕a3 ♖e8 25 h4

A resource typical of such positions.

25...e6 26 g3?!

After 26 h5, Black must take into account various versions of the sacrifice on g6, as well

as the constant threat of h6. However, White stops halfway through and falls for another idea.

26...♗f8 27 ♕b2 ♕e7 28 ♗d2?! ♘c6 *(D)*

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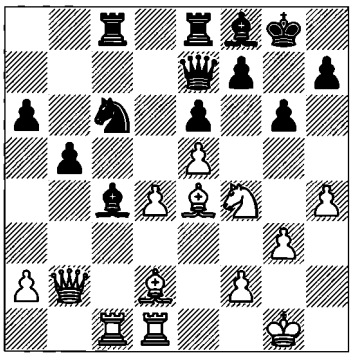

29 d5?

Spectacular yet bad. During the last few moves Black has noticeably improved the centralization of his forces, so there should be no reason for such a sharp action.

29...exd5 30 ♖xc4 dxe4?

A gift in return. The bishop, capable of clearing the e-pawn's path, seemed the more dangerous combat unit; however, the refutation lies in 30...dxc4 31 ♘d5 ♕e6 32 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 33 exf6 ♖xe4 with real winning chances.

31 ♘d5 ♕e6 32 ♘f6+ ♔h8 33 ♖xe4 ♖ed8 34 h5

Black thought that here too, the control of the centre files secures him a substantial advantage, but White has enough counterplay to maintain the balance.

34...♗g7 35 ♖de1 ♘xe5 36 ♖xe5 ♗xf6 *(D)*

37 ♗g5

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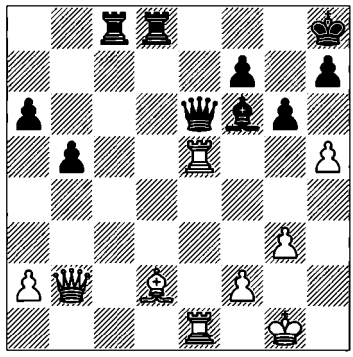

This move saves the game. The main threat is 38 ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 39 ♖e8+ ♔g7 40 h6+.

37...♖f8?!

The simplest way to parry White's threat was 37...gxh5 38 ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 39 ♖xb5 with an even rook endgame. After the text-move Black again has to fight for the draw.

38 ♖xe6 ♗xb2 39 ♖xa6 gxh5

Allowing the pawn to h6 after 39...♖c2 and winding up with a passive king is also unpleasant.

40 ♖b1 ♗d4

Worse is 40...♖c2? 41 ♖xb2.

41 ♖xb5 f6 42 ♗h6?

The wrong square. Even though the bishop would have had no moves left, 42 ♗h4 was correct, tying Black down to the defence of the f6-pawn, which, coupled with the advance of the passed pawn, gives White considerable winning chances. Now Black activates his pieces and carefully works out a draw.

42...♖g8 43 ♔f1 ♖c2 44 ♖f5 ♖d8 45 a4 ♔g8 46 ♖f3 ♖d5 47 ♗e3 ♗xe3 48 ♖xe3 ♖f5 49 ♖e2 ♖xe2 50 ♔xe2 ♔g7 51 ♔e3 h4 52 gxh4 ½-½

Game 9 [D89]

Levon Aronian – Alexei Shirov

Candidates match (game 5), Elista 2007

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♘e2 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 0-0

In this game, we look at lines where Black embarks upon immediate counterplay involving the moves ...♗g4, ...♘a5 and, normally, ...cxd4.

We should note that ...♗g4 before castling is pointless, as ...♘a5 is not an option with the c4-bishop indirectly defended by a possible check on a4.

10 0-0 ♗g4 *(D)*

There is no reason to begin with 10...♘a5, as after 11 ♗d3 ♗g4 the d4-pawn is adequately

protected, and instead of the weakening 12 f3 White has at his disposal the useful 12 h3.

A few words about the timing of the exchange on d4. As a rule, the choice lies with Black, who gets to decide whether he is comfortable with the line 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♗g4 12 f3 ♘a5 13 ♖c1 and which formation – with the c-pawns or without them – is preferable in case of the capture on f7.

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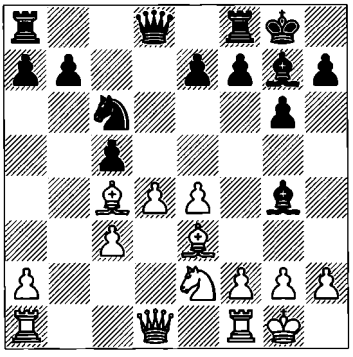

Black keeps up the pressure on d4.

11 f3

This move is virtually forced; the sacrifice of the c3-pawn by 11 d5?! ♘a5 12 ♗d3 c4 is extremely rare.

11...♘a5

The logical sequel to the previous move – it is desirable to secure the e6-square for the bishop with a view to exploitation of c4. How is White to react?

12 ♗d3

This is the main line, but there are two important alternatives to consider:

a) 12 ♗d5 forces the black bishop to retreat to a less prestigious station by 12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗d7, but it expects to find gainful employment on the a6-f1 diagonal, whereas the d5-bishop should be prepared to receive little hospitality from the enemy e-pawn. Nevertheless, lines like 14 ♖b1 a6 15 ♗xb7 ♖a7 16 ♗d5 ♗b5 typically result in the restoration of the material balance and in equality. Revisiting the question of the proper timing of the exchange on d4, we should note that with live infantry on the c-file, Black has an additional possibility in 12...♗d7 (without exchanging on d4) 13 ♖b1 ♕c7; with the c-file open it would imprudent to place the queen on c7 or c8.

b) 12 ♗xf7+ *(D)*.

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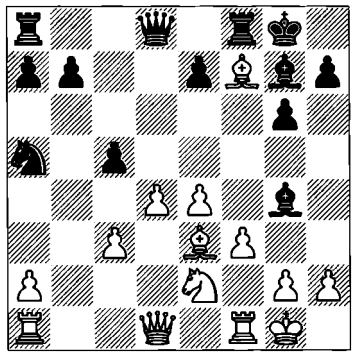


The interest in this variation arose after Karpov used it against Kasparov in the Seville match in 1987, and in several subsequent games. The move is more than obvious, though it had been considered not to be dangerous – the extra pawn has very modest material value and doesn't promise much in the endgame, whereas the light squares – in particular, the important c4-square – are left without sufficient protection. However, Karpov was able to show that the g-pawns do possess a certain functional value: one remains in the king's defensive service, while the other is enlisted in combat action, and the g7-bishop runs the risk of incarceration, hemmed in by the d4-e5 pawn-chain and the pawn on g5. Such high-level use typically provides enough publicity for the variation's popularity to surge for a while, which is what happened here as well, even though White's achievements cannot be called impressive. After the common obligatory moves – 12...♖xf7 13 fxg4 ♖xf1+ 14 ♔xf1 – Black has several different ways to generate counterplay:

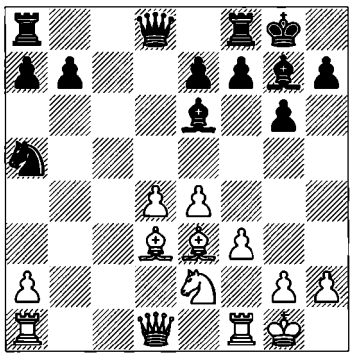
b1) With 14...cxd4 15 cxd4 e5, Black seizes the opportunity to secure his bishop's future. After 16 d5 ♘c4, not good for White is 17 ♗f2 ♕f6 18 ♔g1 ♖f8 19 ♕e1 ♗h6 20 ♘g3 ♕a6 with subsequent seizure of the c-file and an attack on the a2-pawn, so White chooses 17 ♕d3 ♘xe3+ 18 ♕xe3 ♕h4 19 h3 ♗h6 20 ♕d3 ♖f8+ 21 ♔g1 ♕f2+ 22 ♔h1, but in the sharp game that ensues Black has sufficient chances as well: 22...♕e3 23 ♕c4 b5 24 ♕xb5 ♖f2 25 ♕e8+ ♗f8, Kramnik-Kasparov, Linares 1999. The preliminary 16 ♔g1 promises little, as in the endgame after 16...exd4 17 ♗xd4 ♖c8 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 the extra pawn doesn't qualify as a combat unit of full value, though White does retain a slight initiative.

b2) With 14...♕d6, Black doesn't object to the building of the pawn-wall to contain the g7-bishop and even provokes White into doing it with gain of tempo, planning to make hay on the weakened light squares: 15 e5 ♕d5 16 g5 (the immediate 16 ♗f2 is also played) 16...♕e4 17 ♗f2 ♖f8 18 ♘g1 (the knight aims for f3, the ideal post in such positions) 18...♘c4 19 ♘f3 ♘e3+ 20 ♗xe3 ♕xe3 and White has problems keeping his pawn-chain in the centre intact. If he prefers 15 ♔g1, then in the endgame after 15...♕e6 16 ♕d3 ♕c4 17 ♕xc4+ ♘xc4 18 ♗g5 e5 Black has good equalizing chances as well.

b3) 14...♕d7 is a rare but interesting continuation. After 15 h3 ♘c4 16 ♗f2 cxd4 17 cxd4 e5, instead of the natural 18 ♕d3 or 18 d5, the mistaken 18 dxe5? led to a catastrophe in Van Wely-Sutovsky, European Clubs Cup, Rethymnon 2003: 18...♘d2+ 19 ♔e1 (19 ♔g1 loses the exchange to 19...♗xe5 20 ♖c1 ♗b2 – the rook cannot leave the first rank) 19...♗h6 20 ♘d4 ♖f8 21 ♕e2 ♕c7, and the active black pieces chased the white king upon his return to the centre.

12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗e6 *(D)*

W



We have reached a key position in the Classical Exchange. Black has generated maximum activity by playing in the most direct and aggressive manner against White's centre. Black can view the c4-square as a prospective trophy, and if he plants a piece there, he can support it with the move ...b5, which also sets his pawn-majority in motion. In certain cases, White can try to show a black pawn on b5 to be a weakness, but it is undesirable for him to allow the disputed point to be occupied for free and at once. He has three methods to try to prevent Black from settling down on c4 immediately.

14 d5

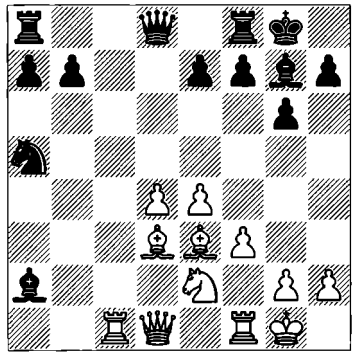
This is the most radical method. The exchange sacrifice has been known for a long time; its first flash of popularity flared in the middle of last century and then faded, leaving the variation with an indeterminate reputation. The resources of computer analysis breathed new life into this continuation.

The two alternatives are:

a) 14 ♕a4 presents Black with tempi and allows him to create counterplay: 14...a6 15 d5 b5 16 ♕b4 ♗xa1 17 ♖xa1 ♗d7 18 ♕d4 f6 (returning the exchange by 18...♖c8 19 ♗h6 f6 with active operations down the c-file doesn't look bad either) 19 e5 fxe5 20 ♕xe5 ♕b8 21 ♕xe7 ♖e8 and Black's chances are at least no worse.

b) 14 ♖c1 sacrifices a pawn, and in spite of the apparent danger, accepting it by 14...♗xa2 *(D)* is the correct course – Black must boldly seize upon any drawback to White's play, since otherwise his strategic aims will have been thwarted for free. Then:

W



b1) The attempt to cut off the bishop's retreat by 15 d5 allows the freeing advance 15...♗b3 16 ♕e1 (or 16 ♕d2) 16...e6.

b2) 15 ♕a4 is the main continuation. Now the bishop can return to its base by 15...♗e6 16 d5 ♗d7 17 ♕b4 e6 18 ♘c3 exd5 19 ♘xd5 ♗e6 20 ♖fd1, when White's powerful central formation and Black's difficulties with the return of the a5-knight compensate for the missing pawn, but not more than that. Leaving the bishop behind the enemy lines for diversion purposes is an interesting idea as well: 15...♗b3 (a move popularized by Anand) 16 ♕b4 b6. White's pieces are placed quite actively, but Black doesn't merely have an extra pawn, but his majority has

now been transformed into a pair of passed pawns. For the sake of setting these pawns in motion, he can acquiesce to considerable concessions in other sectors of the battlefield. The offer of an exchange of queens by either 17 d5 ♕d6 or 17 ♗g5 f6 18 ♗h4 ♕d6 promises Black a fully adequate game.

14...♗xa1 15 ♕xa1 f6 *(D)*

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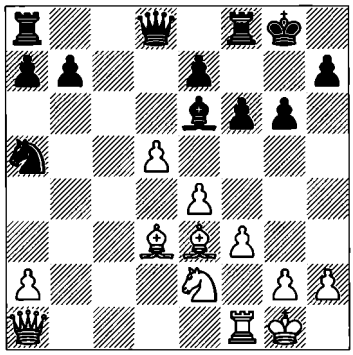


It is evident that White has at least some compensation: his pieces are more active, and the black king's position is weakened by the absence of the dark-squared bishop. The extent of this compensation is the whole question, as Black has resources of his own. The position is open, and Black's counterplay along the c-file can bring welcome simplification, and the transfer of the queen via b6 with gain of tempo may prove an important resource.

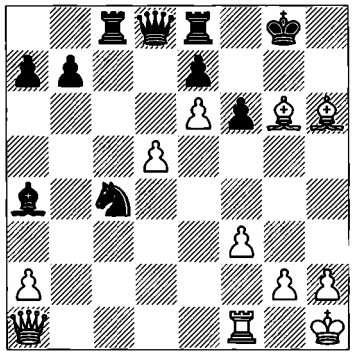
16 ♗h6

Every move one could think of has been tried here – the author counted 17, but the text-move and 16 ♖b1, eyeing both the b7-pawn and the b6-square, have been recognized as the main continuations. In reply to the latter a clear-cut path to equality was demonstrated in the game Nayer-V.Mikhalevski, Moscow 2002: 16...♗f7 (by returning the exchange, Black forces a draw) 17 ♗h6 e6 18 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 19 ♘f4 exd5 20 exd5 g5 21 ♘e6+ ♗xe6 22 dxe6 ♕xd3 and White didn't find anything better than perpetual check.

16...♖e8 17 ♕d4

The interest in the variation was first renewed with the resurrection of the line 17 ♔h1 ♖c8 (17...♗d7? immediately is a mistake, as the knight then changes direction and goes via g3 to e4 to attack f6) 18 ♘f4 ♗d7 19 e5 ♘c4 20 e6 ♗a4 21 ♘xg6 hxg6 22 ♗xg6 *(D)*, known since Bannik-Novotelnov, USSR Team Ch, Tbilisi 1951, but rejected by theory because of the result of that game.

B



The heavy use of machine analysis gave White several spectacular wins, but everybody has a computer, and ways to defend successfully have been discovered. One is available immediately – 22...♔h8 23 ♕e1 ♖g8 24 ♗e4 ♗e8 25 ♕h4 ♖g6. Another is calculated through the wild complications arising after 22...♘e5 23 ♗e4 ♗c2 24 ♗xc2 ♖xc2 25 ♕d1 and then 25...♔h7 26 f4 ♔xh6 27 fxe5 ♕c7 (or27...♕c8). Those who don't mind a degree of risk can play for a win in the sharp endgame arising after 25...♕c7 26 f4 ♖c1 27 ♕xc1 ♕xc1 28 ♖xc1 ♘g4 29 h3 ♘xh6 30 g4 ♖d8 31 ♖c7 ♔f8 32 ♖d7 ♘f7.

17...♗f7 18 ♗b5 e5 19 ♕f2 ♖e7 *(D)*

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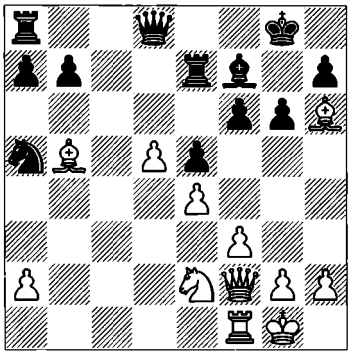


This plan is currently in development. The position has been known since the game Gligorić-Portisch, Nice Olympiad 1974. There White played 20 ♗e3, lost the game, and, as the result, the idea was forgotten. Today it has been revived, although now the treatment is different – White endeavours to clear the long dark-squared

diagonal and not to withdraw the bishop but, on the contrary, to make use of its presence on h6 as a constant mating threat.

20 f4

White expresses his willingness to exchange the queens, after which the position still retains middlegame characteristics, as there are still many pieces on the board, and the initiative and attacking chances remain important factors. The e7-rook is not likely to break out into the open, so the exchange will probably have to be returned; the question is whether Black will manage to extract profit from that or the passed d-pawn will assure White an advantage.

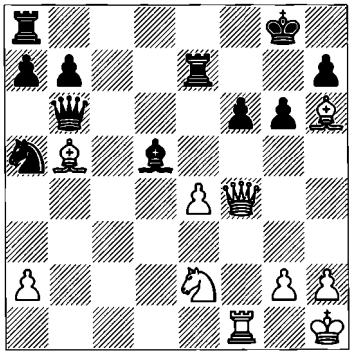
A more recent instalment of the discussion in Topalov-Shirov, Morelia/Linares 2008 tested a new idea. In our game the bishop on b5 found itself in a vulnerable position, so White withdrew it at once with 20 ♗d3, challenging Black to make use of the tempo he is presented with and improve the defence: 20...♖c8 21 f4 ♘c4 22 fxe5 ♘xe5 23 ♕xf6 ♗xd5 24 exd5 ♘g4 (here 24...♘xd3?? is impossible because of 25 d6) 25 ♕f4 ♘xh6 26 ♕xh6, and now Shirov should have tried 26...♕xd5.

20...exf4

There are other continuations as well, but for now this is the possibility that has been studied. Black goes in for a concrete tactical operation.

21 ♕xf4 ♕b6+ 22 ♔h1 ♗xd5 *(D)*

W



Taking immediately on b5 is not an option, since from f6 the queen would threaten a checkmate on either g7 or f8. The counter-offer of the bishop provides g7 with a defender, gaining time to cover f8, so Black succeeds in simplifying the position by exchanging off a passive piece for a more active one.

23 exd5 ♕xb5 24 ♕xf6 ♕e8 25 ♕d4

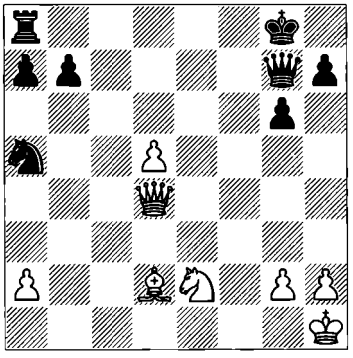
White has opened the long diagonal and tied down the enemy pieces to the defence of the possible mating squares. However, his own king is in need of support, so a tempo has to be spent to prevent trouble on the back rank, and White has to acquiesce to the exchange of his rook, which cannot secure a good square in the face of the quantitative superiority of the enemy major pieces. The last reserve is the knight, which White would love to manoeuvre to f6. This idea was successful in Topalov-Shirov, Wijk aan Zee 2007: 25...♖d8 26 h3 ♖f7 27 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 28 ♕c3 b6 29 ♘g3 and after 29...♘b7 30 ♘e4 White emerged victorious. In a later encounter Rakhmanov-Danin, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2007, Black managed to defend by 29...♖e8 30 ♕d4 g5, although one must think Aronian was prepared for this. So Shirov decided to deviate first:

25...♖f7

This move offers Black another defensive plan.

26 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 27 ♗d2 ♕g7 *(D)*

W



This is the point. After 28 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 29 ♗xa5 ♖c8, while the material advantage is formally with White, the lack of coordination between White's pieces forces him to treat Black's chances with due respect. Considering the match situation (this was the penultimate game, with Aronian a point ahead), White decided not to look for the needle in a haystack, especially as there may be no needle.

28 ♕e4 ♕f7 29 ♗c3 ♖c8 30 h3 ♘c4 31 ♕d4 ♔f8 32 ♕h8+

If White wishes to continue the struggle, 32 ♘f4 is the way.

32...♕g8 33 ♕d4 ♕f7 34 ♕h8+ ½-½

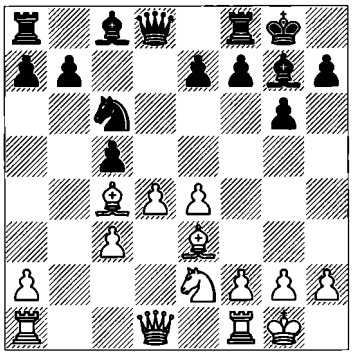
Game 10 [D87]

Mikhail Kobaliya – Alexander Areshchenko

Isle of Man 2006

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♘e2 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 0-0 *(D)*

B

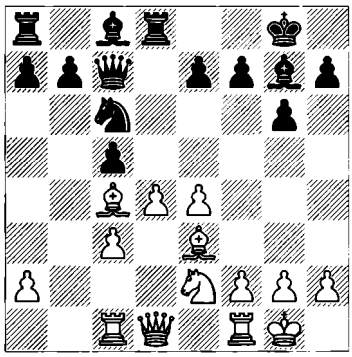


In this game we shall examine yet another method of mobilizing the black forces. Black completes his development and prepares an advance on the queenside, where he has a pawn-majority.

10...♗d7

This is the modern preference when Black opts for this plan. In Fischer's day, 10...♕c7 11 ♖c1 ♖d8 *(D)* predominated.

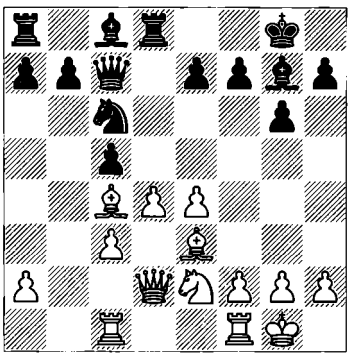
W



This creates some discomfort for the white queen, but there are no concrete threats as of yet, and meanwhile the departure of the rook weakens the kingside defence, and f7 in particular. White must choose the direction of the main advance. Pushing the f-pawn suggests itself, and initially that was the principal plan, carried out either immediately with 12 f4, allowing the development of the enemy bishop to g4 with a temporary pin on the e2-knight, or after the preliminary 12 h3, 12 ♕e1 or 12 ♕a4. This last move is not a signal for the active operations on the queenside, as White lacks the advantage in resources in this sector of the board. Eventually the queen ends up on the attractive post b2, where it takes part in the support of the centre, is safe from attacks and sufficiently mobile for a quick transfer elsewhere. However, his trip has taken a lot of time. Black can meet White's f4 advance with a light-squared blockade according to the following pattern: ...b6, ...♗b7, ...e6 and ...f5; gradually it became clear that he succeeds in this and obtains rich counterplay.

White then embarked on the search for an advantage with play in the centre, at the same time keeping open the option of switching attention to the enemy king at a convenient opportunity. First we shall examine 12 ♕d2 *(D)*.

B

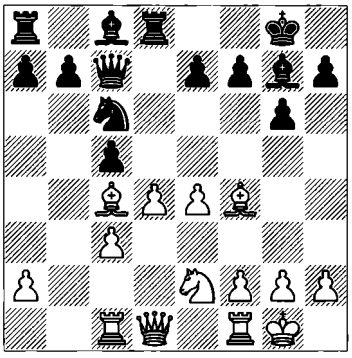


The immediate raid 12...♘e5 13 ♗b3 ♘g4 14 ♗f4 e5 15 ♗g3 ♗h6 16 ♗xe5! favours White, but there are also solid continuations such as 12...a6, 12...b6 and 12...♕a5. Let's dwell a little on the last one: as the d4-pawn is in jeopardy, White has to choose between 13 ♕b2 and 13 ♖fd1. Here too, the time spent decentralizing the queen gives Black a good game after 13 ♕b2 b6. The rook move 13 ♖fd1, reinforcing the centre and hoping for an advantage in case

of the queen exchange, looks more logical. At this point tactical complications would be unfounded: 13...♗g4 14 f3 ♘e5 (the attempt to reverse the move-order by 14...♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♘e5 doesn't work, as after 17 dxe5 the compensation for the queen is more than sufficient) 15 ♗d5. Therefore Black gets on with his development with 13...♗d7. White has fully mobilized, but trying to throw himself on the enemy king leads only to a perpetual check: 14 ♗h6 cxd4 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7, and now the endgame is quite acceptable for Black, so 16 ♕f4 dxc3 17 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 18 ♖d5 (it's the endgame again after 18 ♘xc3 ♖f8) 18...♕b4 19 ♘f4 ♕xc4 20 ♘xg6+ hxg6 21 ♕xg6 (21 ♖h5+ wins the queen, but Black again has fully adequate compensation) 21...♗g4 or 21...e5.

Today White's hopes for an advantage are connected with 12 ♗f4 *(D)*.

B

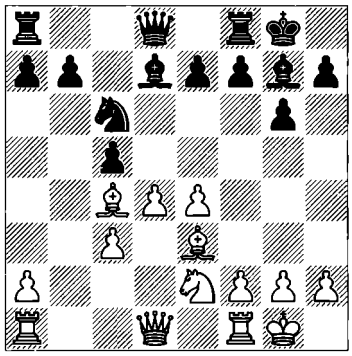


The counter-stab 12...e5?! appears dubious; White continues with 13 ♗g5 ♖d6 14 ♗d5 and in reply to Black's unnatural manoeuvres he simply improves the placement of his pieces.

In the vast majority of games Black picks 12...♕d7, for the time being blocking his own bishop's diagonal but forcing White to clarify the situation in the centre. Then 13 dxc5 is occasionally seen. In agreeing to the destruction of his centre, White temporarily acquires an extra, even if doubled, pawn, but his main achievements are the advantage in space and active pieces. Specifically, the d5-bishop can be driven away with ...e6, but then the other bishop will settle on d6. The main continuation is 13...♕e8 14 ♗d5 ♗d7 15 ♕d3, and if 15...e6, then White can seek an advantage with both 16 ♗b3 and 16 ♗xc6. However, the most important continuation is 13 d5 ♘a5 14 ♗d3. Black often chooses 14...e5 here, closing the position and locking in the enemy light-squared bishop; also the e5-pawn takes over control of the d4-square from its colleague on c5, freeing the latter to advance. Still, in the resulting positions the sum of White's positional pluses outweighs the sum of the drawbacks. Another option is 14...b5 15 ♖b1 a6, when the search for an advantage continues with 16 ♕c1 or 16 ♗e3.

That is why Black started wondering if he wasn't determining the queen's position prematurely, and 10...♗d7 *(D)*, to which we now return, came to the fore:

W



On d7, the bishop supports ...b5 and vacates the c8-square for the queen.

11 ♖b1

This move is mostly a prophylactic measure against ...b5. At the moment the b7-pawn is indirectly defended by the possibility of ...♘a5.

11...♕c7

Why not to c8 at once? It is useful to lure the bishop to f4, where it will come under attack after ...e5, and the defence of the d4-pawn is weakened. Also possible is 11...a6, renewing the threat of the advance of the b-pawn. Then White tries to make use of the weakening of the dark squares by means of 12 dxc5 with subsequent pressure on the b7-pawn, while Black hopes to take advantage of the shattered pawn-centre. Here is a characteristic example: 12...♘a5 13 ♗d3 ♕c7 14 ♖b6 ♖fd8 15 ♕b1 e6 16 ♗g5 ♖e8 and now the thrust 17 c6 gave White an advantage in Kaidanov-Nakamura, USA Ch, San Diego 2004. The text-move threatens the bishop on c4.

12 ♗f4

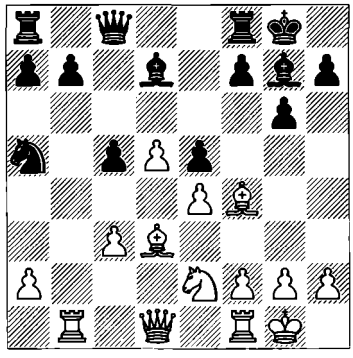
If White withdraws the bishop at once with 12 ♗d3, to avoid being forced to advance in the

centre before his development is complete, then Black increases the pressure by placing one of the rooks on d8. We shall illustrate the options for both sides with the game Sargissian-Lupulescu, European Team Ch, Khersonisos 2007: 12...♖ad8 13 ♕c2 ♘a5 14 dxc5 ♗e6 15 c4 ♘c6 16 ♘f4 ♗c8 17 ♘d5 ♕d7 18 f4 e6 and now White left the knight *en prise*, giving it up for two centre pawns by 19 ♖fd1.

12...♕c8 13 d5 ♘a5

13...♘e5 gives the white centre an opportunity for a concerted advance: 14 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 15 f4 ♗g7 16 e5. Perhaps this is not lethal, but the black king cannot feel safe.

14 ♗d3 e5 *(D)*



This move is a typical idea in this formation. It is clear that the *en passant* capture doesn't come into consideration. Black leaves his opponent with a protected passed pawn, but this is counterbalanced by several pluses of his own:

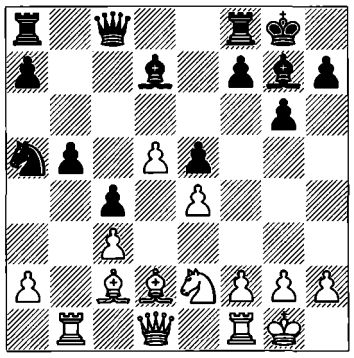
- White's pawn-majority in the centre becomes static, whereas Black's three-to-two queenside advantage is quite dynamic;
- The white pieces' active potential has significantly decreased;
- The c5-pawn is freed from its duty guarding the d4-square and can now advance.

15 ♗d2

White's plan is sure to include f4, so 15 ♗g3 is more common, in order to maintain the attack on the e5-pawn. However, this gives Black a chance to embark upon a very sharp course: 15...f5 16 f4 fxe4 17 ♗xe4 ♘c4 18 ♕d3 (18 d6!?) 18...♘d6 19 fxe5 ♘xe4 20 ♕xe4 ♗f5 21 ♕c4 ♗xb1, Carlsen-Navara, Wijk aan Zee 2007.

15...c4 16 ♗c2 b5 *(D)*

Not only setting the pawns in motion, but also clearing the retreat path for the knight.



White can get rid of one potential weakness by playing 17 a4, but at the moment an open a-file would be in Black's hands.

17 f4 f6

Maintaining the pawn on e5. The alternative is to settle for piece control over that square, but then both sides' pieces are activated. If only the knight could be quickly relocated to e5...

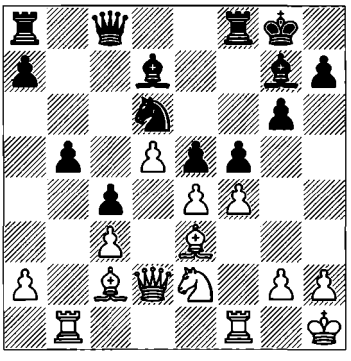
18 ♗e3

After 18 fxe5, the zwischenzug 18...♕c5+ hands the initiative to Black.

18...♘b7 19 ♕d2 ♘d6 20 ♔h1

White is in no hurry to exchange on e5 because he hopes to profit from keeping the option of playing f5, and also to avoid simplifications along the f-file. With this move he clears the knight's path to the active post on f3.

20...f5 *(D)*



However, White's slow play and slightly sensitive back rank allow Black to conjure up some threats, and his fully mobilized black army begins counterplay in the centre.

21 ♘g3

There are many ways in which a series of exchanges can take place, and White chooses one that does not activate Black's pieces, but he

relaxes his control over the c3-square and underestimates Black's chances. Although it was about time to say goodbye to the hopes for an advantage, there were several ways to maintain equality, such as 21 fxe5 ♗xe5 22 ♗d4. Taking the pawn is risky: after 21 exf5 ♘xf5 22 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 23 ♖xb5 ♗d3 the bishop is immensely strong, and it is not so easy for the b5-rook to return, which aggravates the back-rank problems.

21...exf4 22 ♗xf4 ♘xe4 *(D)*

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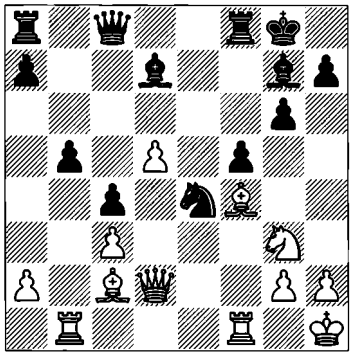


23 ♘xe4?!

It is more prudent to keep the knight by 23 ♗xe4 fxe4 24 ♘xe4, but after 24...♗f5 25 ♘d6 ♕d7 it transpires that the voyage to d6 presents Black with additional possibilities, and in reply to 26 ♘xf5?! Black now has the recapture with the rook, immediately attacking the d5-pawn, as an extra option. Therefore White must fight for a draw with 26 ♖xb5 ♗d3 27 ♖e1 ♖xf4 28 ♕xf4 ♗f8 29 ♖b7 ♗xd6 30 ♖xd7 ♗xf4 31 ♖ee7.

23...fxe4 24 ♗xe4 ♗f5 25 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 26 ♔g1?!

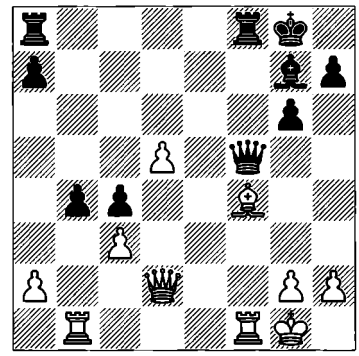
Had White realized the full extent of the impending danger, he would have probably started seeking chances with 26 g3 or 26 h3.

26...b4 *(D)*

27 ♖xb4

27 ♗d6? loses at once: 27...bxc3 28 ♕e2 (28 ♕e3 is met with the simple 28...♕xd5) 28...c2 29 ♖bc1 ♗d4+ 30 ♔h1 ♕xf1+ 31 ♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 32 ♕xf1 ♗e3 33 ♗a3 ♖b8.

W



The endgame after 27 ♗e3 (or 27 ♗h6) 27...bxc3 28 ♖xf5 cxd2 29 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 30 ♗xd2 leaves no hopes for salvation either. The c4-pawn is instantly transformed into a shock combat unit.

27...g5 28 ♖xc4 *(D)*

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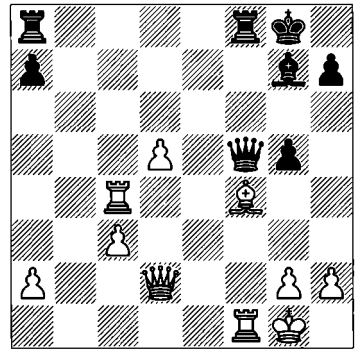


28...♗e5

To obtain a third pawn for the piece, White is forced to expose his king, and Black quickly decides the game with a direct attack.

29 g3 gxf4 30 gxf4 ♔h8 31 ♔h1 ♖ad8 32 ♖e1 ♗f6 33 ♖d1 ♖g8 34 ♕d3 ♕g4 35 ♕f1 ♖de8 36 d6 ♖e2 37 h3 ♕g3 0-1

The system of development with the bishop on c4 and the knight on e2 is experiencing a new surge in popularity. This is particularly true of the lines with the exchange sacrifice, examined in Game 9, where important new games appear on a regular basis.

4 Modern Exchange Variation: White Plays ♘f3

On the basis of games from the 1920s, the development of the knight to f3 was for many decades considered inferior, because the knight is subject to pin and possible exchange by ...♗g4, and thus cannot play a full part in the struggle for d4. To put it another way, it allows Black to use his light-squared bishop in the fight for the dark squares in a way that was not available in the lines we examined in the previous chapter. White has a similar resource in that ...♘c6 can be met by ♗b5, but this is less potent since an exchange on c6 brings another pawn to the c-file which can be used to fight for the d4-square.

We should consider the question of why White is so preoccupied with maintaining a pawn on d4. After all, a game cannot be won by merely reinforcing the centre and admiring it from a distance. It is only natural that sooner or later the pawns must advance, but for the advance to be effective it must be supported by a fully mobilized army, and it is desirable to keep open the option of beginning the advance with either centre pawn. And if Black does manage to force the premature advance of one of them, it would be nice to obtain compensation in the form of other positional or material concessions.

The rebirth of the system began around thirty years ago and it fairly quickly gained a dominant place in modern practice. One of the key points is that at the cost of allowing ...♗g4 ideas, White is able to develop his pieces to more natural squares where they are better able to support the advance of the pawns. And the ...♗g4 idea itself turns out to have its dark side, as it leaves the b7-pawn unguarded, a factor that is highlighted by the move ♖b1. This idea is important in many of the ♘f3 lines at some stage, while the main line with an immediate ♖b1 is discussed in the next chapter. This short chapter forms an introduction to the ♘f3 Exchange and its major ideas, while also examining two other development plans for White. Note that in many cases the move ♖c1 is important, with ideas of penetrating to c7 if Black opens the c-file, or as a preparation for the d5 advance if Black instead maintains the tension.

Game 11 (Nayer-Khamrakulov) is devoted to the most natural placement of bishops on e2 and e3. White castles quickly and is ready to drive the c6-knight away by playing d5.

In **Game 12** (Vitiugov-Zhao Jun) White immediately develops his queenside pieces, removing all possible objects of attack from the firing-line of the g7-bishop. White meets the black queen's sortie with a standard pawn sacrifice.

Game 11 [D85]

Evgeny Nayer – Ibragim Khamrakulov

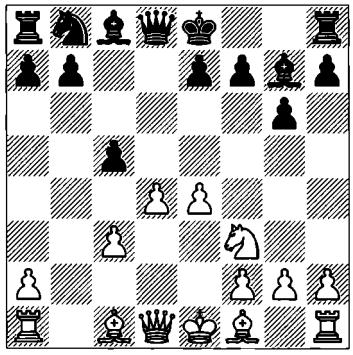
Ubeda 2001

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 c4 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e4 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 c5 *(D)*

8 ♗e2

Let's examine the prophylactic continuation 8 h3. Despite the loss of a tempo, this move enables White to hold the centre for a while. After

W



8...0-0 9 ♗e2 Black has two reasonable options:

a) 9...♘c6 10 ♗e3 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕a5+ 12 ♗d2 ♕a3 and now 13 d5 is forced if White does not wish to repeat moves or give up the right to castle. Black rarely accepts the exchange sacrifice; compared to Game 9, the differences favour White, but after 13...♘e5 (or 13...♘d4) 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5, 15 0-0 ♗d7 gives Black his fair share of the play. If the offer is limited to a pawn, it should be taken – 15 ♖b1 ♕xa2; the potential value of the connected passed pawns constitutes a reserve that allows dumping some material if necessary.

b) The search for a set-up where the move h3 looks the least useful leads to the selection of the fianchetto of the light-squared bishop 9...b6 – with standard play and practically an extra tempo.

If the right to move is conferred to the f1-bishop, it has two reasonable options, one of them the text-move, and the second 8 ♗b5+, when Black has two main replies:

a) 8...♗d7 9 ♗xd7+ (in case of 9 ♗e2 Black often chooses the aforementioned plan with the transfer of the bishop to c6) 9...♕xd7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗e3 cxd4 12 cxd4 ♘c6. The bishop exchange has simplified the position, and Black has no problems finding good posts for the remaining minor pieces, while the open file facilitates the reduction of the number of major pieces.

b) 8...♘c6. Now 9 d5 ♕a5 10 ♖b1 a6 fails to disturb Black, while the endgame after the relatively forced sequence 9 0-0 cxd4 10 cxd4 0-0 11 ♗e3 ♗g4 12 ♗xc6 bxc6 13 ♖c1 ♕a5 14 ♕d2 ♕xd2 15 ♘xd2 ♖fd8 16 ♘b3 a5 is not considered to be problematic for him.

8...0-0

The immediate inclusion of another piece in the attack upon d4 by 8...♘c6! gives White the opportunity to offer yet another version of the exchange sacrifice: 9 d5 ♗xc3+ 10 ♗d2 ♗xa1 11 ♕xa1 ♘d4 12 ♘xd4 cxd4 13 ♕xd4 *(D)*.

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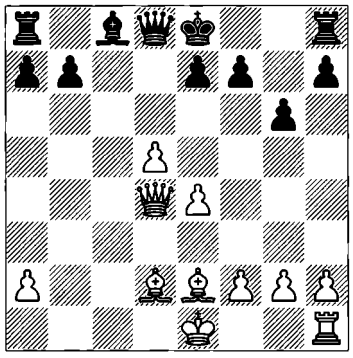

Nevertheless, Black's chances are not worse whether he intends to keep the gift with 13...f6 or agrees to return it after 13...0-0 14 ♗h6 f6. The attempt to hold the centre by 9 ♗e3 ♗g4 forces White to play 10 e5, which can be considered a positional concession.

Of course, having read the introduction to this chapter, you will be wondering what happens after 8...♗g4, a thematic way to increase the pressure on the centre. Then White can strive for a minimal advantage based on the bishop-pair: 9 ♖b1 (this move should not come as a surprise either) 9...♘c6 10 ♖xb7 0-0 11 0-0 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♘xd4 14 ♗g5.

9 0-0 cxd4

If he wishes to avoid mass exchanges, Black can prefer 9...b6 here as well, even though this gives White a respite from the defence in the centre for one move, and allows him to arrange his forces more actively: 10 ♗g5 ♗b7 11 ♕d3 ♕d7 12 ♖ad1 and the future passed d-pawn promises White the better chances. Two other standard continuations can transpose, though White acquires the extra option of d5 (at once in reply to 9...♘c6, in case of 9...♗g4 after 10 ♗e3 ♘c6). With a pawn remaining on c3, the g7-bishop has nothing to treat itself to on the long diagonal, and this renders White's d5 advance extremely potent. The exchange in the game clears the diagonal.

10 cxd4 ♘c6 11 ♗e3 ♗g4 *(D)*

Black has succeeded in including all his minor pieces in the attack on the d4-pawn, and its

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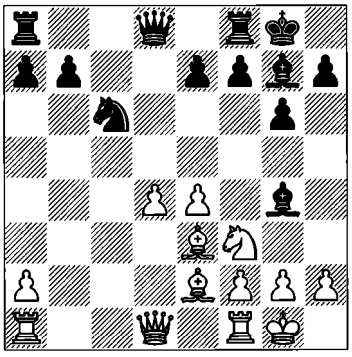

defence has no reserves left. White must either advance one of the pawns or counterattack b7.

12 d5

This thematic response is also best.

12 e5 locks the g7-bishop out of the game for a while, but the price seems exorbitant – the light squares are weakened, and the centre is deprived of the prospects of further advance. Black's hopes of wresting the initiative from White appear well-founded, although the d4-e5 pawn-wall is hard to breach. It is also not clear what advantage there is to hope for in the line 12 ♖b1 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♗xd4.

12...♘e5

White's previous move doesn't really sacrifice the exchange, as after 12...♗xa1 13 ♕xa1 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♘a5 15 ♗h6 f6 he can win it back at once. However, the position is simplified too much then, so more interesting is 16 ♗g4 ♕d6 17 ♗e6+ ♔h8 18 h4 ♘c4 19 ♕c3 b5 20 ♕h3 with a strong initiative, Mastrovasilis-Chuchelov, European Ch, Warsaw 2005.

13 ♘xe5 ♗xe2 14 ♕xe2 ♗xe5 *(D)*

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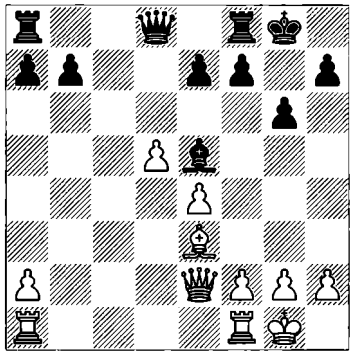

Both sides have played logically and consistently, but White has achieved his main aims. Despite the significant simplification, he retains a certain initiative, and his central superiority looks a more weighty factor than Black's two-to-one queenside preponderance. Moreover, the black king's cover is weakened, especially if the bishops are exchanged. However, if White fails to make use of his dynamic trumps, the assessment will change.

Now White must decide where to place the rook. The immediate occupation of the open file is a routine decision that promises further exchanges, yet each side needs to keep the open line constantly under control in order not to cede it to the opponent. In a situation where there is only one open file, control over it constitutes a serious advantage. The most natural placement of the rooks is on b1 and d1 or on d1 and f1.

15 ♖ad1

Here the rook supports the creation of a passed pawn and prepares the bishop exchange, so this is a logical decision.

Picking 15 ♖ab1 creates the opportunity to offer a queen exchange on b5 after 15...♕d7, while 15...b6 weakens the c6-square, and White will try to use it to seize the c-file. After an exchange of queens, the passed pawn may prove more dangerous on c6 than on the d-file.

15...♕a5 *(D)*

Along with 15...♕d7, this is the most natural reply. Black connects rooks and trains his queen's sights on the enemy pawns on a2 and d5, several squares on the c-file and, as a prophylactic measure, protects a7, freeing the rook from that duty.

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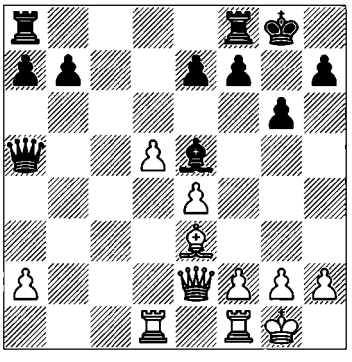

16 h4

The idea behind this move is clear – the h-pawn is destined either to weaken the enemy king's cover or, should it be allowed to reach

h6, to take direct part in the attack. However, White's follow-up doesn't create the impression that these are elements of the same plan. 16 f4 ♗g7 posed more problems, with the choice between 17 f5, 17 e5 or 17 ♕f2, tying one rook to the defence of the a7-pawn and the other to the f-file.

16...♖ac8 17 ♗d4 ♕c7

Taking advantage of the opportunity to seize the file or centralize the queen. Black agrees to allow the creation of a passed pawn on the d-file after the exchange of the queens, as long as that is not accompanied with an attack on his king.

18 ♕e3 ♗xd4 19 ♕xd4 *(D)*

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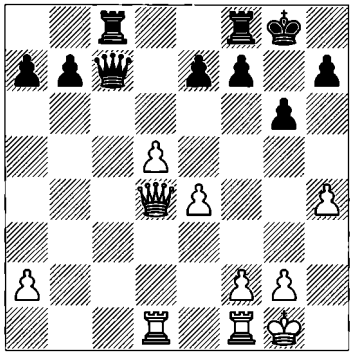

19...♕c5

Now White manages to neutralize Black's control of the open file while keeping the queens on the board. 19...b6 is more accurate.

20 ♕b2 b6 21 ♖c1 ♕d6 22 g3

Nevertheless, White has nothing concrete, so decides to maintain the position largely unchanged, hoping for an inaccuracy on Black's part. The primary purpose of the text-move is to deny f4 to the black queen, while at the same time consolidating the kingside pawn-chain.

22...f6 23 ♔g2?!

Stepping into the line of a possible capture with check on d5 is not the best idea.

23...♕e5?!

Inexplicably, Black voluntarily spoils his own pawn-structure. He could have taken the favourable opportunity to play 23...f5 24 f3 e6. After 25 ♖xc8 ♖xc8, 26 ♖d1 fxe4 27 fxe4 exd5 leaves the white king as exposed as his black counterpart, while 26 ♕f6 fxe4 hands Black the initiative.

24 ♕xe5 fxe5 *(D)*

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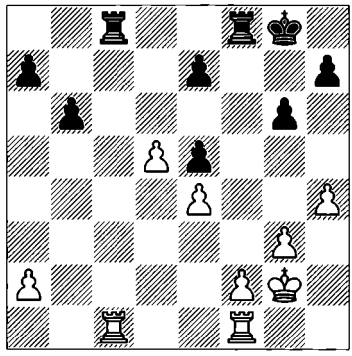

It is possible that there are real drawing prospects in this endgame too. However, the number of black weaknesses has increased, while his chances for counterplay have diminished.

25 ♖fd1 ♔f7 26 f4?!

In his hurry White helps his opponent get rid of the weakness on e5. It would be more expedient to bring the king into the centre first and only then start active operations.

26...exf4 27 gxf4 ♖fd8 *(D)*

There are good drawing chances in the line 27...e6 28 d6 ♖xc1 29 ♖xc1 e5 30 ♖c7+ ♔e6 31 fxe5 ♔xe5 (but not 31...♖f7? 32 ♔g3, as all pawn endgames are won for White).

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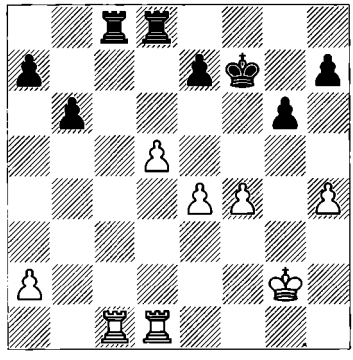

28 ♔f3 ♔f6 29 ♔e3 e5?!

Why help White to create a pair of passed pawns? White has no clear-cut plan of realization of his positional advantage, and in the coming play the drawing tendencies characteristic of rook endgames leave Black some hope for salvation. For the moment Black could adopt a waiting policy, for example with 29...♔f7.

30 ♖f1 h6 31 ♔d3

White covers the c-file and, after exchanging on c8 and e5, plans to drive the king away from

the blockading square with the other rook (infiltrating via f7 or after gaining control of the f5-square with the help of the h5 advance) and set the pawn-pair in motion. Therefore Black himself takes on f4.

31...exf4 *(D)*

32 ♔d4?

White returns the favour. There was an easy win after 32 ♖xf4+ ♔e5 and now 33 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 34 ♖f7 or 33 ♖cf1.

32...♖xc1?

This should settle the result, whereas the immediate 32...g5 would level both sides' chances with a probable draw: 33 e5+ ♔f5 34 hxg5 hxg5 35 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 36 e6 g4 37 e7 f3 38 ♖e1 g3 39 d6 f2 40 ♖e5+ and one of the kings will succumb to a perpetual check.

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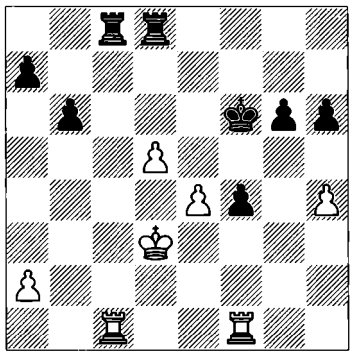

33 ♖xc1 g5 34 ♖c6+?

Now 34...♔g7! would salvage a draw; 34 e5+! wins.

34...♔f7? 35 e5 ♔g7 36 h5 f3 37 ♖g6+ ♔h7 38 e6 g4 39 ♖xg4 ♖f8 40 e7 1-0

Game 12 [D85]

Nikita Vitiugov – Zhao Jun

World Junior Ch, Erevan 2006

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♘f3

The desire to develop the queenside first is often fulfilled with the immediate 7 ♗e3 c5 8 ♕d2 *(D)*.

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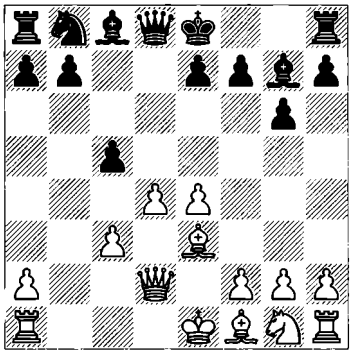

In most games this comes down to a transposition of moves, but we should note the independent continuation 8...♕a5 9 ♖b1. White wants to force the queen exchange early, while Black hasn't castled and the king's rook is far from the events in the centre, plus after the exchange the b1-rook controls the b4-square and attacks the pawn on b7. If Black obliges by 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 11 ♔xd2 0-0, then White can play 12 ♗d3, when instead of retreating to the first rank the king has a post on e2 ready for him. However, there are problems with the centre here as well: 12...e6 13 ♘f3 ♖d8 14 ♖hc1 ♘c6 and now 15 ♖c4 looks clumsy, while 15 e5 f5 (but not 15...f6 16 ♔e2) gives Black counterplay. Instead of the exchange, Black can play 9...b6 or 9...a6, when White usually reckons that he has succeeded in weakening Black's position and moves the rook to c1. This move-order also grants the d4-pawn the freedom to advance, and the c-pawn can later support its neighbour, but building the pawn wedge c4-d5-e4 takes time (unless Black helps by developing the knight to c6) and hasn't received general acclaim. Black gets ahead in development and successfully counterattacks the centre with the undermining ...e6 and ...f5.

If Black doesn't reply with concrete threats, then White can initiate the bishop exchange on h6.

7...c5 8 ♗e3 *(D)*

The plan is ♖c1, clearing the long diagonal of potential targets and securing the c3-pawn. This grants White more freedom in the centre but delays castling.

8...♕a5

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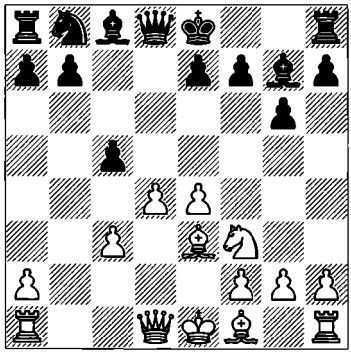


This is the main line. Let's examine non-standard methods of counterplay applicable to this move-order:

a) 8...♗g4 is of course thematic, but the development of the bishop before castling allows the possibility of checks from a4 or b5, though neither achieves much. The pattern of play after 9 ♗b5+ will be familiar to us – 9...♘c6 10 0-0 cxd4 11 cxd4 0-0 12 ♗xc6 bxc6, when the bishop-pair balances the weakness on c6. Also little is promised by 9 ♕a4+ ♘c6 (after 9...♗d7 10 ♕a3 the queen's new post can be considered advantageous) 10 ♘e5, when Black can choose 10...cxd4 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 cxd4, or he can play more sharply with 10...♗xe5 11 dxe5 ♕c7. White retains hopes for an advantage in the line 9 ♕d2 cxd4 10 cxd4 ♘c6 11 ♖d1; in accepting a defect in his pawn-structure, White reckons that the bishop-pair and the pawn-centre (and a strong passed d-pawn in the future) will prove more important.

b) 8...♘c6 can lead to original play after 9 ♖c1:

b1) 9...♕a5 is met by 10 d5, when 10...♗xc3+ 11 ♖xc3 ♕xc3+ 12 ♗d2 ♕f6 13 dxc6 ♕xc6 gives White the better chances, so the knight is forced to move to e5 or even b8.

b2) The preliminary exchange 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕a5+ can be met with a pawn sacrifice, viz. 11 ♗d2 ♕xa2 12 d5 ♘e5 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 ♗b5+, when 14...♗d7 is recognized as the lesser evil. However, few players are willing to suffer for a pawn with the king on d7.

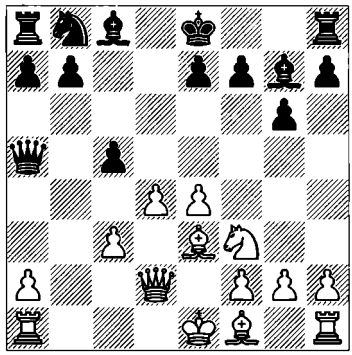
c) 8...0-0 usually transposes to the main lines which we shall examine below, but we should mention the possibility 9 ♕d2 ♗g4 10 ♘g5. Along with the prophylactic h3, another method of neutralizing the pin on the knight is carrying out that same h3 with a simultaneous attack on the enemy bishop. The knight's position on g5 is shaky, but Black is reluctant to drive it away with pawns, as that creates weaknesses, and in the meantime it takes the e6 retreat-square away from the bishop. White keeps the centre, but Black secures the coveted c4-square: 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♘c6 12 h3 ♗d7 13 ♖b1 ♖c8 14 ♘f3 ♘a5 15 ♗d3 ♗e6 16 0-0 ♗c4, Tallaksen-Holmsten, Nordic Ch, Bergen 2001.

9 ♗d2

The development of the bishop from c1 to d2 via e3 looks peculiar, but it has its adherents. The potential threats against the queen on a5 provide some justification, and take the question of the queen exchange off the agenda.

9 ♕d2 *(D)* is more natural and common.

B



Black can exchange queens by 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕xd2+, but there is no need to hurry with this until White has defended c3 and is threatening to play d5. With the immediate exchange, the recapture with the knight relocates it to a less vulnerable post on b3, so Black usually picks one of the following three standard continuations:

a) 9...♗g4 lost its former popularity after Kasparov's defeat against Kramnik. Perhaps the resulting endgame can be held, but painstaking defence is required of Black: 10 ♖b1 a6 11 ♖xb7 ♗xf3 12 gxf3 ♘c6 13 ♗c4 0-0 14 0-0 cxd4 15 cxd4 ♗xd4 16 ♗d5 ♕xd2 (16...♗c3?! was played in Kramnik-Kasparov, BGN World Ch (game 2), London 2000) 17 ♗xd2 ♖ac8, Tregubov-Bacrot, French Team Ch, Montpellier 2001.

b) After 9...0-0 White places the rook on b1 or c1:

b1) 10 ♖b1 does not protect the c3-square, and as a result, does not render the d-pawn

mobile. However, in case of the queen exchange the rook is better placed, as it prevents the knight's jump to b4 and forces the bishop to take the attack on b7 into account. In addition, ♖b5 becomes an immediate threat. Then:

b11) A complex struggle arises after the sacrifice of the queen for a rook and a bishop by 10...♘c6 11 ♖b5 cxd4 12 ♖xa5 dxe3 13 ♕xe3 ♘xa5. While Black does not get a full material equivalent, the weakness of White's queenside grants Black some compensation.

b12) Of course, Black is not obliged to change the material balance so radically and can meet the threat with 10...a6, when the rook can consider its mission accomplished and move on by 11 ♖c1, when the d4-pawn is ready to advance. Now if Black exchanges queens, there is an extra option of attacking a d8-rook with ♗b6. The prophylactic 11...e6 gives White a tempo for the bishop exchange 12 ♗h6, when the endgame after 12...cxd4 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 15 ♔xd2 is to his advantage, since the king has acquired a comfortable square on e3.

b2) 10 ♖c1 *(D)* is more common.

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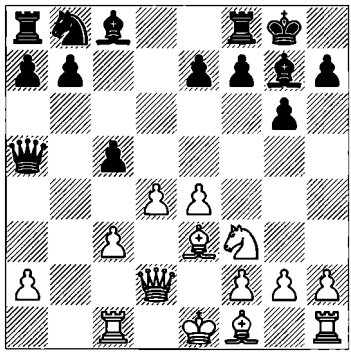

Then:

b21) Following the exchange 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕xd2+ White has played all possible recaptures on d2. After 12 ♘xd2 we should note Kramnik's original idea 12...♖d8 13 ♘f3 ♘c6 14 d5 (on the board is the same position as in the variation that is commonly reached via a different move-order, which we shall examine below – 12 ♔xd2 ♘c6 13 d5 ♖d8 14 ♔e1 – with the sole difference that White has kept the right to castle). The popularity of 12 ♗xd2 has grown; here is a game featuring an interesting tactical struggle: 12...♗g4 13 ♗e3 ♘c6 14 d5 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♘d4 16 ♗g2 ♖fc8 17 ♔d2 e6 18 ♔d3 exd5 19 ♗xd4 dxe4+ 20 fxe4 ♖d8 21 e5 ♗xe5 22 ♖c4 b5 (Kotanjian-Pantsulaia, Dubai 2007) and now 23 ♖b4! ♖ac8 24 ♔e4 gives White good winning chances.

b22) Recently the continuation 10...♖d8 11 d5 e6 *(D)* has been preferred.

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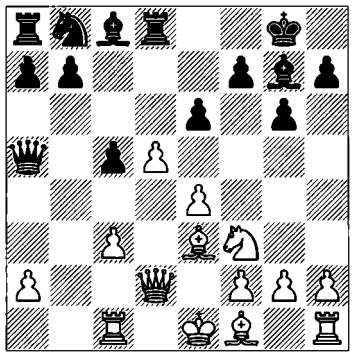


At first sight the position after 12 c4 should be to White's advantage – he has a powerful centre, which usually counts for more than an advantage on a flank, while development-wise there is approximate parity. However, practice has demonstrated that Black's chances are not worse thanks to the excellent bishop on g7 and in the future the other one on f5. After 12...♕xd2+ the main reply is 13 ♘xd2 (the bishop keeps c5 under attack and blocks the e-file), when 13...b6 14 ♗e2 ♘a6 15 0-0 ♘b4 (this transfer of the knight to c3 is the point of the set-up) 16 a3 ♘a2 17 ♖ce1 (17 ♖c2 ♘c3 is risky for White after 18 ♗f3 exd5 or 18 ♗d3 ♗a6) 17...♘c3 18 ♗f3 ♗b7 19 g4 exd5 20 exd5 b5 led to mass exchanges in Zhou Jianchao-Wang Yue, Shandong Zonal 2007. The other recapture, 13 ♔xd2, hasn't brought White much joy either; even though the queens have disappeared from the board, there are still many pieces left, and the king is uncomfortable in the centre: 13...♘a6 14 a3 b6 15 ♔c2 ♗b7 16 g4 ♘c7 17 ♗f4 ♖ac8 18 ♗e2 exd5 19 exd5 ♘e6, A.Grigoryan-Rodshtein, World Junior Ch, Erevan 2007.

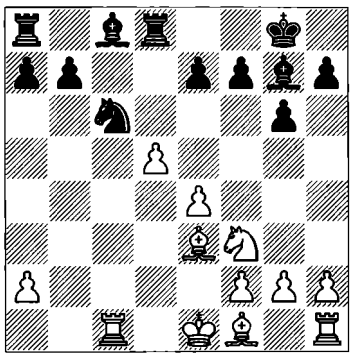
c) 9...♘c6 is the most natural continuation, forcing the recapture with the king after the exchange of queens. White is left with the decision where to post his rook:

c1) On b1 it forestalls the knight leap to b4 and gains a tempo for the development of the f1-bishop: 10 ♖b1 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 12

♔xd2 0-0 13 d5 and now one line is 13...♖d8 14 ♗d3 ♘a5, when we see a drawback to the rook being on b1: the threat of an invasion on c7 is not an option. The dark-squared bishop can find an active post on either c5, f4 or g5, whereas Black's counterplay is based on the undermining thrust ...f5. The knight may also withdraw at once by 13...♘a5, when the exchange sacrifice 14 ♗d3 e6 15 ♗c5 ♖d8 16 ♗e7 ♖d7 17 d6 a6 18 ♖b6 ♘c6 19 ♖xc6 bxc6 20 ♖b1 is interesting, though insufficiently tested. We should reiterate that the rook's move to b1 does not pose the threat of d5, and Black can transpose into one of the lines examined earlier.

c2) 10 ♖c1 is more common here too. Now the exchanging line is 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 12 ♔xd2 is more forced. 12...0-0 threatens to include yet another unit in the attack on d4, and the need to disturb the c6-knight arises. White can attack it with 13 ♗b5, but Black gets a good game with 13...f5. The other method is 13 d5; this move must be made at once and not as a reply to ...♖d8, so as not to allow the immediate counterblow ...e6. Black plays 13...♖d8 anyway, when the attempt to block the d-file with 14 ♗d3 allows 14...♘b4, and the knight manages to take part into the counterattack on the d5-pawn: 15 ♗b1 e6 16 a3 exd5. The main continuation is Kasparov's 14 ♔e1 *(D)*, which he introduced in 1981.

B



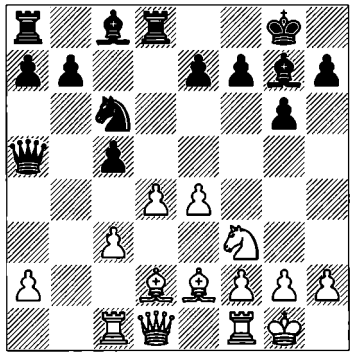
This may not look very pretty, but there is no other way to meet ...e6. The knight usually moves to a5, though after 14...♘b4 no advantage for White has been demonstrated either. The pair of hard-working bishops compensates for the possible spoiling of the pawn-structure by 15 ♗d2 ♘a6 16 ♗g5 ♔f8 17 ♗xa6 bxa6 18 ♖c7 ♖d7. After 14...♘a5 15 ♗g5 ♗d7 16 ♗d3, Black can opt for 16...♖dc8 17 ♔e2 (as mentioned above, Kramnik, who arrived at this position via a different move-order and preserved the right to castle, played 17 0-0 after all, but didn't achieve anything concrete in Kramnik-Svidler, Dortmund 2004) 17...e6, when 18 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 19 ♖c1 ♖xc1 20 ♗xc1 exd5 21 exd5 b5 leads to a minor-piece ending where White's greater piece activity is counterbalanced by Black's queenside pawn-majority. But Black can play the sharper 16...f5 17 e5 ♗e8 18 d6 ♖dc8 with good prospects in the subsequent complex struggle.

9...0-0 10 ♗e2 ♘c6

A rare move that amplifies the effect of the d5 advance. The common continuation is 10...♗g4 11 0-0, when 11...♖d8 brings up the reserves to mount further pressure on d4. White has at his disposal the sharp pawn sacrifice 12 d5 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♗xc3 14 ♗xc3 ♕xc3 15 ♖b1 b6 16 e5, as in Korchnoi-Balinov, Mitropa Cup, Leipzig 2002. The preliminary 11...e6 is more restrained, with good prospects of equality.

11 0-0 ♖d8 12 ♖c1 *(D)*

B



Playing d5 will cost White one of the pawns, and the one on a2 is the less important.

12...cxd4

The immediate 12...♕xa2 is also possible, when White combines the threat of the advance in the centre with play against the infiltrator in his rear, the enemy queen: 13 d5 ♘e5 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗g5. By exchanging on d4 first, Black deprives the rook of the a1-square but gives the d2-bishop an extra diagonal.

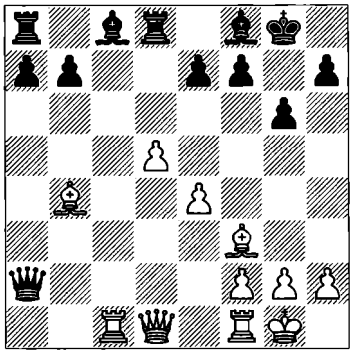
13 cxd4 ♕xa2 14 d5 ♘e5 15 ♗b4 ♘xf3+

15...♘c6 deserved consideration, as there are no particular achievements for White to be seen after either 16 ♗c4 ♕b2 17 ♗c5 b6 18 ♕a4

bxc5 19 ♕xc6 ♗g4, or in the line 16 ♖c2 ♕a4 17 ♗d2, when 17...♘e5? loses to 18 ♖xc8, but 17...♘d4 is not bad.

16 ♗xf3 ♗f8 *(D)*

W

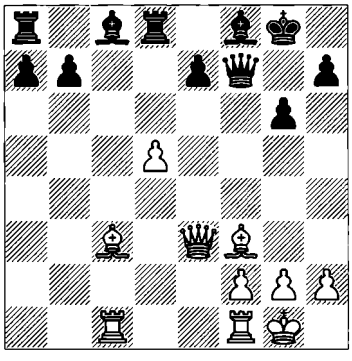


17 ♗c3 ♕a6 18 ♕d4 f6 19 e5 fxe5

This exposes the king, but 19...♗g7 20 d6 fxe5 21 dxe7 is still more dangerous, since on e7 the pawn creates numerous tactical threats.

20 ♕xe5 ♕f6 21 ♕e3 ♕f7 *(D)*

W



22 ♗a5?!

White has a selection of good continuations. Including the last idle piece in the action by 22 ♖fe1 is the most solid one, while a tempting idea is to let the rook through to c7 by 22 ♗a1 (or 22 ♗b2), considering that 22...e6 can be met with 23 ♗g4 and now 23...exd5? is no good because of 24 ♖xc8 and 25 ♗e6. The text-move lets a part of the advantage slip away.

22...b6 23 d6 ♖b8 24 ♖c7 ♖xd6 25 ♗b4 ♖d8?!

25...♖d7 26 ♕c1 ♖d8 27 ♖xa7 ♗f5 promised more.

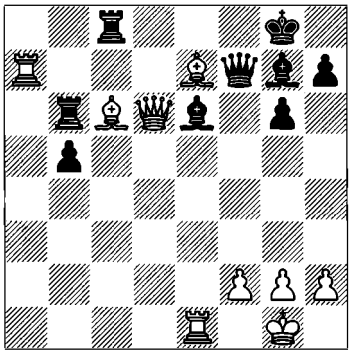
26 ♗xe7 ♖e8 27 ♕e5 ♗g7 28 ♕d6 ♗e6 29 ♗c6 ♖ec8 30 ♖xa7 b5?

This again brings Black to the brink of defeat. 30...♕f5 was correct, removing the queen from the gaze of the a7-rook, and forcing White to take measures against ...♗e5.

31 ♖e1 ♖b6? *(D)*

A losing move. Some hope remained after 31...♗c4 32 ♗d7 ♗c3 33 ♗xc8 ♖xc8, staking everything on the b-pawn. Still, the adventures are not over yet.

W



32 ♗e8?

32 ♖c7 ♖xc7 33 ♕xc7 ♖a6 34 ♕d8+ ♗f8 35 ♗xb5 wins easily.

32...♖xe8?

The last mistake. There were still some defensive chances after 32...♕xf2+ 33 ♔xf2 ♖xd6 34 ♗xd6 ♖xe8.

33 ♕xb6 ♗c4 34 ♗b4 ♖xe1+ 35 ♗xe1 1-0

For a long time the schemes of development examined in this chapter were overshadowed by the system with ♖b1. As the popularity of that system wanes, the interest in the alternative variations can be expected to grow, and their intensive development promises the appearance of new discoveries and ideas.

5 Modern Exchange Variation with ♖b1

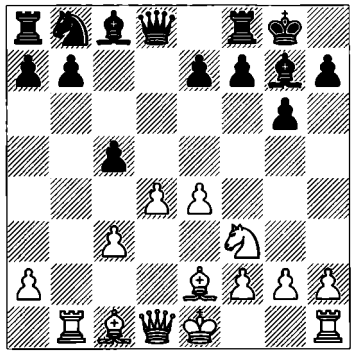
(Chapter introduction and Game 13 contributed by Viacheslav Eingorn.)

We now move on to one of the most topical systems within the Grünfeld, and arguably its main line for much of the past couple of decades. This line is characterized by White playing the Exchange Variation with the moves ♘f3 and ♖b1. The first of these moves is natural enough, but the latter requires some explanation. Initially the move ♖b1 has a rather outlandish appearance, although the fact that the move is such a well-established part of the theoretical landscape may blind us to just how surprising the move seemed in its early years. While the move ♖c1 (the main approach at the start of the 1980s) has a clear purpose, putting the rook on b1 fails to defend c3 and targets a defended pawn. Yet it has become by far the most popular method, and has proved an enduring weapon, giving Grünfeld players serious headaches for many years, with no truly clear-cut solution found despite extensive testing at the highest levels.

In fact, the ♖b1 idea arose from a consideration of the drawbacks to other moves. The birth of this system was preceded by a crisis for White in the variation 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♘f3 c5 8 ♗e2. This bishop move looks extremely natural, but after 8...♘c6, attacking the pawn-centre without delay, White lacks an effective reply. 9 ♗e3 is well met by 9...♗g4!, when White's centre becomes a static target rather than a dynamic weapon, while 9 d5 ♗xc3+ 10 ♗d2 ♗xa1 11 ♕xa1 ♘d4 12 ♘xd4 cxd4 13 ♕xd4 is unconvincing after either 13...0-0 or 13...f6. The check 8 ♗b5+ also fails to pose Black significant problems because of the same reply, 8...♘c6; e.g., 9 0-0 cxd4 10 cxd4 0-0 11 ♗e3 ♗g4.

With those lines in mind, the apparently unpretentious 8 ♖b1 turns out to be a rather nimble way to parry Black's main active ideas. Now ...♘c6 can be met by d5, while ...♗g4 leaves the b7-pawn *en prise*. White intends to play ♗e2 next, and it is hard for Black to find a reply that is quite as useful as ♖b1 that serves as preparation for ...♘c6 or ...♗g4. Normally Black simply castles, and 8...0-0 9 ♗e2 *(D)* brings us to the standard position.

B



The result of the insertion of the moves ♖b1 and ...0-0 is that White's centre retains its dynamic mobility. There are many options for Black here, with no clear consensus as to which is best:

- 9...b6. Black avoids an early confrontation, preferring to continue the development of his pieces for the time being.

- 9...♘c6 is, as advertised, met by 10 d5. As White has removed his rook from the g7-bishop's line of fire, this continuation now involves the sacrifice of the c3-pawn only. Although 10...♗xc3+ is playable, the reserved 10...♘e5 is more sensible.
- 9...♗g4. This is the other natural method to increase the pressure on the enemy centre, but after 10 0-0 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3, White's chances turn out to be preferable.
- 9...♕a5 and 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕a5+ constitute Black's most radical reaction – he seeks to disturb the material balance in order to give the struggle a concrete tactical quality.

All of the continuations listed above gradually went through scrupulous analytical and practical tests, which resulted in the creation of the impressively sized section of the Grünfeld Defence under the conventional title of '♖b1'. Many of these lines have been worked out in great detail, with novelties being introduced well beyond move 20. As someone who stood at the very source of this whole variation three decades ago when it was still a vast expanse of virgin territory, I (V.E.) now watch its unrestrained evolution not only with interest but also with a certain degree of irony.

Game 13 (Eingorn-Malaniuk) features 9...b6, and serves as an introduction to some of the key ideas behind ♖b1.

In **Game 14** (Vaïsser – Vachier-Lagrave), we move on to 9...♘c6 10 d5 ♗xc3+ with Black grabbing a pawn at the cost of allowing White a serious initiative, while also discussing Black's 8th-move alternatives to castling.

The subject of **Game 15** (Shabalov-Areshchenko) is 9...♘c6 10 d5 ♘e5, a line that can lead to extremely forcing play, with plenty of spectacular ideas. These were among the earliest ♖b1 lines to be analysed in great depth, with one particularly notorious subvariation featuring an 'opening' novelty on move 36 back in 1984.

The final example of the chapter, **Game 16** (Gelfand-Shirov), deals with 9...♕a5 and 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕a5+. The latter has been the most popular line in the more recent history of ♖b1, with the pawn sacrifice 11 ♗d2 taking centre stage.

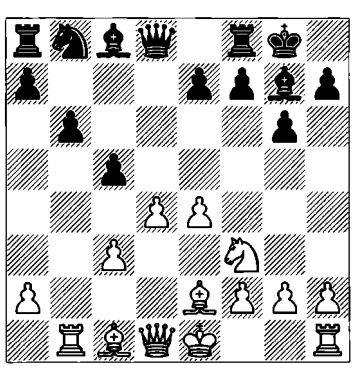
Game 13 [D85]

Viacheslav Eingorn – Vladimir Malaniuk

Baku 1979

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e4 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 c5 8 ♖b1 0-0 9 ♗e2 b6 *(D)*

W



By refraining from the attack on the d4-pawn (9...♘c6) and the diversionary ...♕a5, Black wants to turn the game down a relatively quiet course. Still, we can point out that in comparison with the classic variation 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♘e2 White's minor pieces occupy more favourable positions, which accentuates the importance of his pawn-centre.

10 0-0

The premature flank attack 10 h4 is successfully parried with 10...♗g4. Castling appears the optimal decision, although 10 ♗e3 ♗b7 also deserves consideration and now either 11 e5 with a subsequent h4, or 11 ♕d3.

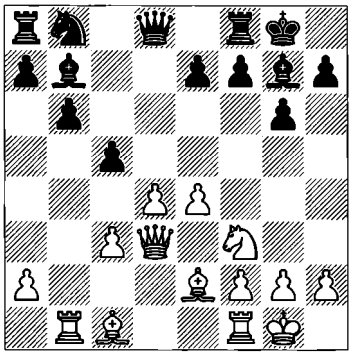
10...♗b7

Various experiments, like the line 10...♕c7 11 ♗g5 ♗b7 12 ♕d3 h6 (12...e6!?) 13 ♗h4 (13 ♗e3 is not bad either) 13...cxd4 14 cxd4 ♕f4, are not appropriate in this situation, because in the end they are merely grist to White's mill: 15 d5 ♗a6 16 ♕d1 ♕xe4 17 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 18 ♖e1 ♕f5 19 ♗xe7 ♖fc8 20 d6, Haba-Feher, Zalakaros 2000.

11 ♕d3 *(D)*

A noteworthy manoeuvre: the queen protects the pawns on e4 and c3 while preparing the d5 advance. 11 ♕c2 is less expedient because of 11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♕c8, but the immediate 11 d5!? (a thematic pawn sacrifice) is interesting: 11...♗xc3 12 ♗c4 with adequate positional compensation for the slight material loss.

B



11...cxd4

This type of exchange conforms to the spirit of the position in principle, but there was no need to hurry with it. In the current situation Black usually employs one of these two approaches: he either restrains the d4-pawn with ...e6, or tries to deflect White from advancing with d5. Here are a few sample lines (in 'barebones' style – you are invited to study the lines further if they attract your interest) where Black for the moment refrains from the exchange of pawns:

a) 11...e6 12 ♗g5 (12 ♖d1 ♘d7 13 ♗g5 ♕c7) and now Black can try 12...♕c7 13 ♕e3 (13 d5 exd5 14 exd5 ♕d6) 13...♘d7, while an alternative set-up is 12...♕d6 13 ♕e3 cxd4 (or 13...♖c8) 14 cxd4 ♘c6.

b) 11...♗a6 12 ♕e3 and now Black has played 12...♕c8, 12...e6 and 12...♗xe2, but 12...♕d7, intending to generate counterplay by ...♕a4, is more interesting. White has several replies, including 13 dxc5, 13 d5 (13...♗xe2 14 ♕xe2 ♗xc3 15 ♗h6) and 13 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 14 d5.

c) 11...♕d7 12 d5!? (12 ♗g5 and 12 ♖d1 are also possible) 12...c4 13 ♕c2 ♖c8 14 ♘d4 is another line.

Assessing of the pros and cons of the inclusion of the preliminary 11...cxd4 12 cxd4, it is hard to draw a definite conclusion. Although this way Black succeeds in restricting somewhat his opponent's choice, given an opportunity, White can turn the quick opening of lines (the c-file, the a3-f8 diagonal) to his advantage.

12 cxd4 e6 *(D)*

12...♗a6 and 12...♕d7 still remain the alternatives.

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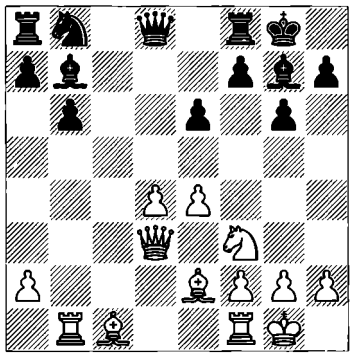


13 ♗g5

White takes advantage of the favourable opportunity to regroup with ♗g5 and ♕e3. The continuation 13 ♖d1 is about as good.

13...♕d6

Here the move to c7 or c8 is out of the question, but the queen is not safe on d6 either, as it must constantly watch for a new attack.

14 ♕e3

Having received the necessary support, the bishop, on the other hand, is placed very well on g5, controlling the important dark-squared diagonals. This permits White to plan the advance on the flank with h4-h5, in addition to operations in the centre, whereas Black still needs to complete the mobilization of his forces.

14...♘d7?!

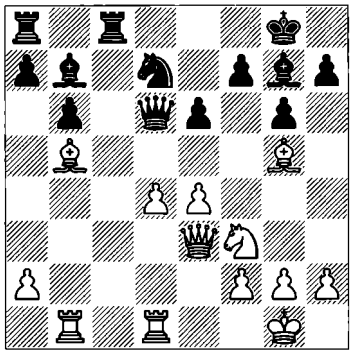
A substantial positional error. 14...♘c6 was preferable, although in this case White keeps the initiative with 15 ♖fd1 ♖fc8 (15...♖fe8 16 ♗b5; 15...♖ac8 16 h4!?) 16 d5 (or 16 ♗h6). Black could have also begun with 14...♖c8, in

order to continue after 15 ♖fd1 with 15...♘c6 or even 15...♕f8. The move chosen by Black is inferior because, above everything, the f6-square is not available to the knight thanks to the threat of a pawn fork, while if left on d7, the knight only interferes with the coordination of the rest of the pieces.

15 ♖fd1 ♖fc8 16 ♗b5! *(D)*

More accurate than 16 h4 ♕f8.

B



Now the other white bishop takes up a menacing position too, and on top of that it cannot be driven away, because after 16...a6 17 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 the b6-pawn is hanging.

Somehow Black has imperceptibly drifted into a position where he experiences a severe shortage of constructive moves. For example, 16...♗c6 is unacceptable due to 17 ♗a6. Now the objectively best continuation is probably the modest 16...♘f8, even if such a passive retreat constitutes a tacit acknowledgement of White's evident positional advantage.

16...♖c2?!

Curiously enough, this pseudo-active sortie occurred again in several later games. In the vain search for counterplay, Black pushes too hard and, as a result, merely aggravates his problems. We should add that the other attempt to complicate the fight promises nothing good either: 16...h6 17 ♗xd7 (17 e5 is not as clear) 17...♕xd7 18 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 19 ♕xh6 ♗xe4 20 ♘e5 (20 ♘g5 ♗xb1 21 ♕h7+ ♔f8 22 ♖xb1 ♖c7!) 20...♕e7 21 ♖b3, and White's attack on the black king then develops without a particular effort.

17 ♗a4

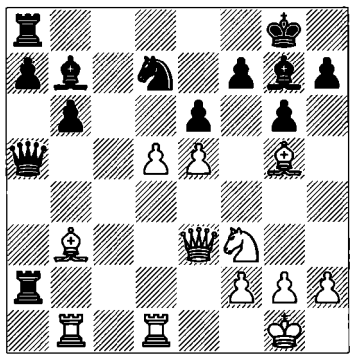
At once inviting the rook to clarify its intentions. Strictly speaking, it should have now returned whence it came.

17...♖xa2 18 e5 ♕d5 19 ♗b3 ♕a5

It is not hard to see that Black's exchange sacrifice is not quite sound. Even the relatively simple 20 ♗xa2 ♕xa2 21 ♘d2 (21 ♖bc1!?) 21...♕d5 22 f3 f6 23 exf6 ♘xf6 24 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 25 ♘e4 ♗g7 26 ♔h1 favours White, but he had another idea in mind.

20 d5! *(D)*

B



The pawn breakthrough in the centre is quite a tempting idea, as Black's major pieces lined up along the a-file don't take part in the ensuing battle.

20...♗xd5 21 ♗xd5 exd5 22 e6 ♘f6

After 22...♘c5 23 exf7+ ♔xf7 24 ♖xd5 White's attack is decisive. The main line runs as follows: 24...♖a1 25 ♕e7+ ♔g8 26 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 27 ♕xd8+ ♔f7 28 ♘e5+! ♔e6 29 ♕g8+ ♔f5 30 ♕f7+ ♔xg5 31 h4+, mating. The retreat 22...♘f8 doesn't save Black either. There follows 23 exf7+ ♔xf7 24 ♖dc1! (24 ♖bc1?! allows resistance by 24...♔g8 25 ♖c7 ♕b5! 26 ♕e7 ♕b2, although 27 ♔h1! ♔h8 28 g3 ♖a1 29 ♖xa1 ♕xa1+ 30 ♔g2 should be winning), when 24...♘e6 loses to 25 ♘e5+ ♗xe5 26 ♕xe5 ♖e8 27 ♖c8, and after 24...♔g8 25 ♖c7, Black no longer has the 25...♕b5 defence, while 25...♖a1 simply loses to 26 ♖xg7+.

23 exf7+ ♔xf7 24 ♖bc1 ♖e8 25 ♖c7+

It would appear that the invasion by the white rook should quickly conclude the struggle, but quite a few adventures still lie ahead.

25...♔f8

25...♔g8 is no good because of 26 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 27 ♗xf6+. But the text-move should not have fared much better...

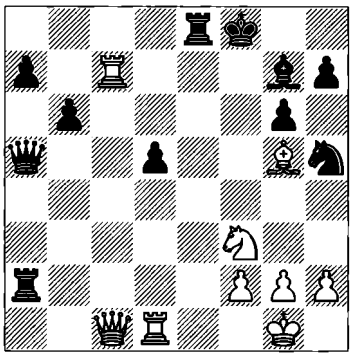
26 ♕c1?

Stumbling over a flat spot. At least two lines guarantee White victory: the complex 26 ♕f4

♖a1 27 ♕d6+ ♔g8 28 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 29 g4! ♖xd1+ 30 ♔g2 and the simple 26 ♗xf6 ♖xe3 27 ♗xg7+ ♔g8 28 fxe3.

26...♘h5! *(D)*

W



The only reply that allows Black to prolong the resistance. White's desire to reach the goal by the simplest means has played a cruel trick on him and noticeably complicated his task.

27 ♗h6?

Yet another oversight. It seems that the win was still within reach after 27 ♕c6! (27 ♗e7+ looks somewhat weaker) 27...♕c5 (27...♖ae2 28 g4) 28 ♕xe8+ (or 28 ♗e7+ ♕xe7 29 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 30 ♕a8+ ♖e8 31 ♕xd5) 28...♔xe8 29 ♖e1+ ♔f8 30 ♗e7+.

27...♕a4

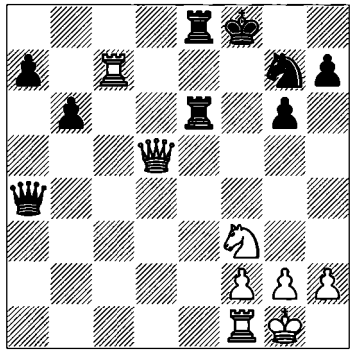
Serious problems await Black in case of 27...♖ae2?! 28 g4 ♕a4 29 ♖d4. Even though the text-move gives him a satisfactory defence, 27...♕b4! is more accurate, bearing in mind the line 28 ♗xg7+ ♗xg7 29 ♕h6 ♕b2 30 ♖f1 ♖a1. And if White replies as in the game, with 28 ♖f1, then the black queen is posted better on b4.

28 ♖f1 ♖ae2 29 ♗xg7+ ♘xg7 30 ♕g5

By playing 30 ♕c3 d4 31 ♘xd4 ♖2e7 32 ♘e6+ ♔g8 33 ♘xg7 ♖xc7 34 ♕xc7 White retains an extra knight for a while, but it is not clear how he can extract any real benefit from this circumstance. He decided to maintain the tension, but 30 ♕h6!? ♖2e7 31 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 32 ♕xh7, devoting maximum attention to the enemy king, was perhaps more suitable for the same purpose. The subsequent events took place in severe time-trouble and hardly need a detailed commentary.

30...♖2e6 31 ♕xd5 *(D)*

B



31...♕e4?!

Equality results from 31...♖6e7 32 ♘g5 ♘f5.

32 ♕a2 h6?

Here, too, 32...♖6e7 is better. Considering the likely loss of both queenside pawns, Black should have avoided as much as possible creating additional weaknesses.

33 ♕xa7 ♖a8?

The final oversight, leading to an immediate defeat.

34 ♖f7+ 1-0

Game 14 [D85]

Anatoli Vaïsser – Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

French Ch, Chartres 2005

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♘f3 c5 8 ♖b1 0-0

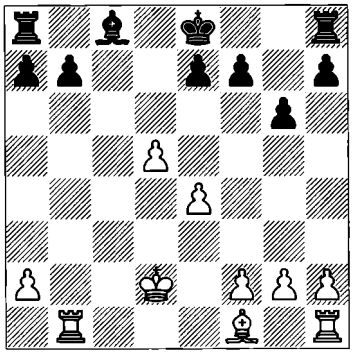
There is little point in 8...♕a5 before castling. A possible, though not mandatory, reply is 9 ♖b5, when 9...♕xc3+? is bad due to 10 ♗d2 ♕a3 11 ♕c2, when there is no apparent defence against ♖b3. Better is 9...♕xa2 10 ♖xc5 ♘d7 with an unclear position; White controls the centre, but the c3-pawn is backward, and the rook is out on an extended trip. 9 ♗d2 is played more often, generally transposing into the main variations (see Game 16).

The same can be said about 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 ♕a5+ 10 ♗d2 ♕xa2. White can return to the

well-trodden path of Game 16 if he wants, but now he has the extra option of developing the bishop more aggressively by 11 ♕c1 0-0 12 ♗c4.

We shall examine 8...♘c6 closely. White's thematic and critical reply is of course 9 d5. Then yet another type of endgame is possible: 9...♗xc3+ 10 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 11 ♕xd2 ♘d4 12 ♘xd4 cxd4 13 ♕xd4 (the advantage remains with White in the major-piece middlegame as well – 13 ♗b5+ ♗d7 14 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 15 ♕xd4; the choice is a matter of taste) 13...♕a5+ 14 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 15 ♔xd2 *(D)*.

B



We shall encounter a similar ending later; the difference here is that the black king is still in the centre. Does this provide more grounds to hope for equality? From d8 the king covers the point of entry but disconnects the rooks, and he won't be allowed to settle on d6. Therefore, here too, White's remaining pieces will be much more active than those of his opponent.

Instead of the capture on c3 Black has another standard option – 9...♘e5, but here in addition to transposition into the main continuations that we examine in the current game, White has the additional possibility of a check on b5 with the subsequent formation of a light-squared pawn-wedge in the centre, but now without the passive light-squared bishop.

9 ♗e2 *(D)*

9...♘c6

The other method of putting pressure on the centre – 9...♗g4 – has not received general acceptance. As a rule, White agrees to swap the d4-pawn for the one on b7, but without allowing Black to centralize his knight. Then the bishop-pair advantage secures White a small but solid initiative: 10 0-0 ♗xf3 (here, as well as after a

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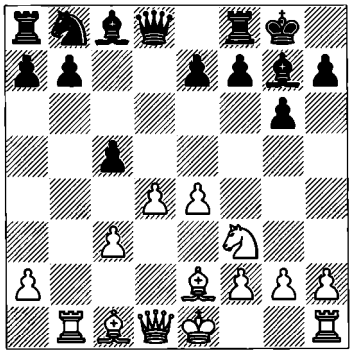

preliminary pawn exchange, the knight move to c6 provokes the d5 advance) 11 ♗xf3 cxd4 12 cxd4. In response to any capture on d4, White can take the b7-pawn, while 12...♗xd4 may be met with the sharper 13 e5 ♘c6 14 ♗h6 ♖e8 15 e6.

10 d5 ♗xc3+ 11 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 12 ♕xd2 ♘a5

The endgame that arises after the return of the pawn by 12...♘d4 13 ♘xd4 cxd4 14 ♕xd4 ♕a5+ 15 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 16 ♔xd2 *(D)* was rejected by theory long ago.

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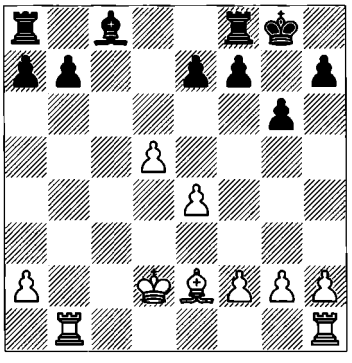

It is easy to see that the only differences between this diagram and the one at the beginning of the game are that Black has castled and White has the extra move ♗e2. The black king is farther away from the centre, and in particular from the defence of c7; on the other hand, it allows the rook into the battle. The e2-square is not the most functional post for the bishop, but this inclusion is undoubtedly useful if only because the rook's path has been cleared.

Why is White, so reluctant to exchange the queens in other cases, so happy to go for the endgame in this edition? The key point is that the versions of the exchange that we have already seen did not lead to an endgame; those

positions could be classified as a queenless middlegame as there were many pieces left on the board, and the white king was uncomfortable in the centre. However, here it is ready to take a most active part in the fight and work-wise it is quite a powerful unit. The other factor that tips the scales in White's favour is his advantage in development, and the fewer pieces remain, the more it makes itself felt. As an example, let's have a look at the source game of this ending, Eingorn – Sideif-Zade, Tashkent 1980: 16...♖d8 (the immediate 16...e6 is well met with either 17 ♗c4 or 17 d6) 17 ♔e3 b6 18 ♖bc1 (precisely this rook, it has nothing left to do on b1) 18...e6 19 ♗c4 ♔f8 20 ♖hd1 (20 dxe6 promises an advantage as well, but White strives for the maximum) 20...♔e7 21 e5 (a refined move, fixing dark squares and cutting off the enemy's retreat; because of the threat of d6+, the reply is forced) 21...exd5 22 ♗xd5 ♖b8 23 ♖c7+ ♖d7 24 ♖dc1 ♗b7 25 ♗xf7 ♗xg2 26 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 27 ♔f4 and the decisive penetration by the king to f6 cannot be prevented.

We now return to 12...♘a5 *(D)*:

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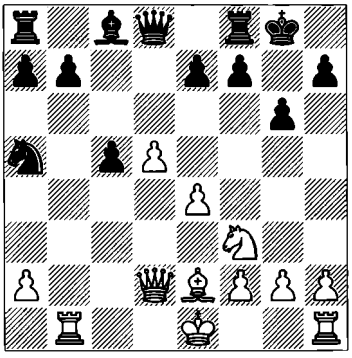

So then, White has given up a pawn. As compensation he has the superiority in the centre, the enemy king is deprived of its main defender, and the a5-knight is on the rim. The initial impression is that this is more than enough and the position favours White, which was the general consensus in the early days of the variation's history. As the role of computers in analysis grew, so did the confidence in defensive resources; the machines themselves, with their less pious perception of classic chess laws, grab pawns in much worse situations. As a result, a certain reassessment of the diagram position took place, and today the variation is recognized as playable and is in a state of active development.

13 h4

This move suggests itself – the threat is a conventional mating attack.

13...♗g4 *(D)*

It might seem that the attack can be repulsed with 13...f6, covering the dark squares, opening a path for the rook and the queen, intending to meet 14 h5 with 14...g5. However, White then has 15 ♘xg5, when accepting the sacrifice loses: 15...fxg5? 16 ♕xg5+ ♔h8 (or 16...♔f7 17 h6 ♔e8 18 ♗b5+ ♗d7 19 ♕h5+ ♖f7 20 e5) 17 h6 ♖f7 18 ♗h5 ♕g8 19 ♕xg8+ (also good is 19 ♕e5+ ♖f6 and, for example, 20 g4) 19...♔xg8 20 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 21 ♖c1 b6 22 ♖c3, Savchenko-Svidler, Groningen open 1993. The combined attack by the two rooks allows a quick win of the h7-pawn, after which there are only two steps separating the squaddie on h6 from the general's epaulettes. Black can hold out by declining the offer and playing 15...e5, but then the extra pawn is gone, while White retains chances of developing his initiative.

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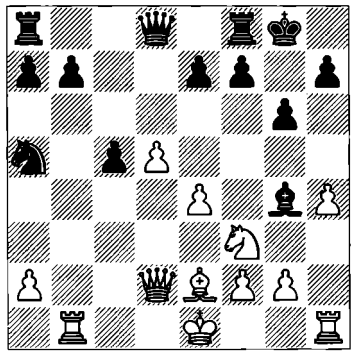

The top priority is the elimination of the f3-knight, the most dangerous assault unit.

14 ♘g5

This move keeps the knight, but the price is the speed of the offensive. Let's examine the other option, 14 h5. It is obvious that 14...♗xh5? is no good, as both 15 ♕h6 and 15 g4 win easily. Therefore Black must pick the most radical method of forestalling the potential threat of ♘g5, namely 14...♗xf3 15 gxf3 (it is necessary to keep the c4-square under control, since after 15 ♗xf3? ♘c4 16 ♕h6 ♕a5+ Black launches a counterattack) 15...e5. In order to protect the

h7-pawn, Black needs to clear his second rank. The idea of the defensive set-up is based on the dark-squared blockade of the central pawn-group, so that the pawn-chain should remain on the light squares, curbing the e2-bishop's activity. The knight is planned to be transferred to d6. If Black manages it all in good time, he will have sufficient counterplay, for the sake of which the extra pawn can be returned as well; for example, 16 ♕c3 ♖e8 17 hxg6 fxg6 18 ♕xc5 b6 19 ♕e3 ♖c8. For now the attempt to lift the blockade immediately by 16 f4 fails to bring success after 16...exf4 17 ♕xf4 ♕e7, so the search for an advantage is focused on 16 hxg6 fxg6 17 d6 *(D)*.

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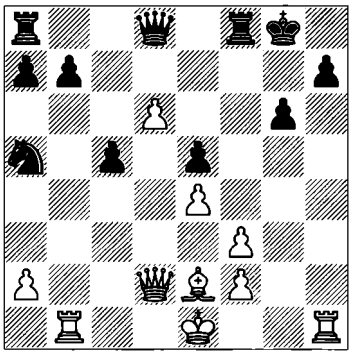

Here, too, White wins back the pawn, because 17...♖e8? is bad due to 18 ♕d5+ ♔g7 (or 18...♔h8) 19 ♖xb7+, while 17...♖f7? blunders the knight away: 18 ♕d5 ♕f6 19 ♖b5. The main continuation is 17...b6 18 ♕d5+ ♔g7 19 ♕xe5+ ♕f6. If the queens are exchanged, then White's own king in the centre doesn't let the white pieces provide the pawns with effective support, and it is not clear even how to save them. Thus the logical course is to combine the threat of the pawn advance with play against the enemy king. However, Black, whose knight has been given a direct route to the unassailable d4-square, also completes the centralization of his army and for the moment successfully fends off White's offensive: 20 ♕h2 h5 21 ♖d1 ♘c6 22 ♖g1 ♘d4 23 ♖d3?! ♘e6 with a new blockading scheme, Zhou Jianchao – Vachier-Lagrave, China-France match, Chenzheng 2005.

14...♗xe2 15 ♔xe2 h6

The other continuation is 15...e6 16 h5 ♘c4 17 ♕c1 exd5. White has two branches to explore:

a) 18 ♘xh7 ♖e8 19 hxg6 ♖xe4+ 20 ♔f1 ♖h4 21 ♖xh4 ♕xh4 22 ♔g1 ♘e5 23 g3, Ernst-L'Ami, Groningen 2004.

b) 18 hxg6 fxg6 19 ♖xh7 ♕f6 20 f4 b6 21 ♖b3 ♖ae8 22 ♖bh3 ♖e7 23 ♖7h6 and it is not easy for Black to disentangle himself, Avrukh-Sutovsky, Ashdod 2004.

16 ♘f3

This retreat slows down the tempo of the attack. 16 h5 hxg5 17 hxg6 fxg6 has also been tested. The capture 18 ♕xg5 takes the heat off the a5-knight and allows the black queen to start harassing the white king by 18...♕d6 19 ♖h6 ♕a6+ 20 ♔e1 ♔g7. Beginning with 18 ♖h6(?) at first looks more cunning, as doubling the rooks on the h-file is threatened too. However, if Black finds 18...♖xf2+ 19 ♔xf2 ♕f8+ 20 ♔g1 ♕xh6 21 ♕xa5 g4, it is the white king who is in trouble. The game continuation is also possible after the retreat 16 ♘h3.

16...♔h7 17 ♕c3 b6 18 ♘g5+ *(D)*

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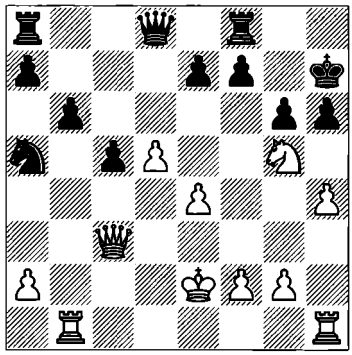

The knight offers itself on the same square, although in a different edition. Taking it at once is no good, but it doesn't plan to retreat a second time.

18...♔g8 19 h5 hxg5

The subsequent events give Black no cause for optimism, so we shall mark the recently employed 19...♕c8 as deserving consideration.

20 hxg6 fxg6 21 ♖h8+

It would be interesting to test 21 ♖bd1, threatening to advance the centre pawns.

21...♔f7 22 ♖h7+ ♔e8 23 ♕g7 ♔d7

23...♕d7?! blocks the king's natural retreat-path and endangers the f8-rook; 23...♕d6?!, inviting 24 e5, is still more dubious. The text-move gives White a strong passed pawn.

24 d6 ♕e8?!

Since this turns out badly, one can suggest 24...♖e8!? 25 dxe7 ♕c7.

25 dxe7 ♖g8 26 ♕e5

The e7-pawn creates tactical tension as with the black king on its second rank, there are ideas of queening with discovered check. The pawn has to be blockaded, which gives rise to combinative motifs to clear its path.

26...♔c8 *(D)*

Believe it or not, this move was an attempt to improve over a previous game. The natural 26...♘c6?! had been played, but it turns out to be a losing move: 27 ♖d1+ ♘d4+ 28 ♖xd4+ cxd4 29 ♕d5+ ♔c7 and the left-hand rook was dealt a thematic blow – 30 ♕xa8.

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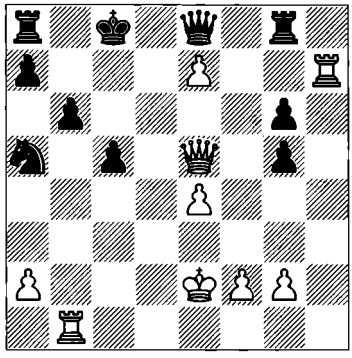

27 ♕d5!

27 ♖d1 is possible. Black has to defend against the check on d8 by 27...♔b7 28 ♖d8 ♕b5+ 29 ♔f3 ♖e8 30 ♕d5+, when a sharp major-piece endgame can arise: 30...♘c6 31 ♖xa8 ♔xa8 32 ♔g3 gives White at least a safe draw, while 30...♕c6 is likely to lead to a repetition of moves in the line 31 ♖f7 ♕xd5 32 exd5 ♘c4 33 ♖f8 ♘d6 34 ♖d7+ ♔a6 35 ♖d8 ♔b7. With the text-move, White hopes for more.

27...♘c6 28 ♖bh1

It seems that White might be angling for a repetition by 29 ♖h8 ♔c7 30 ♖8h7 (threatening to take on g8) 30...♔c8. However, the position contains deeper ideas than that.

28...♘d4+ 29 ♔e3 ♖b8 30 g4 *(D)*

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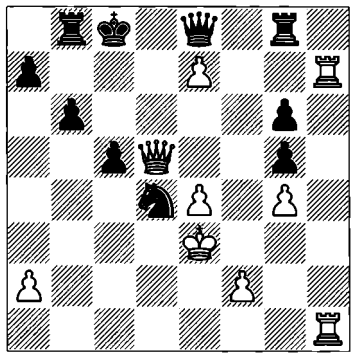

It turns out that Black is in zugzwang: the king cannot venture onto its second rank because of ♕xg8, and the queen has to defend the g8-rook, which has not a single move left. Why the other rook cannot go to b7, we shall find out from the game. The knight must defend the e6-square and is only capable of driving the white king to g2, and then what? The a-pawn can only manage a few steps.

30...♖b7 31 ♕xg8

This time the right-hand rook receives the symmetric blow. The rest is simple.

31...♕xg8 32 ♖h8 ♖xe7 33 ♖xg8+ ♔b7 34 ♖xg6 ♖f7 35 ♖h3 ♘c2+ 36 ♔e2 ♘d4+ 37 ♔f1 1-0

Game 15 [D85]

Alexander Shabalov – Alexander Areshchenko

Port Erin 2005

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♘f3 c5 8 ♖b1 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♘c6 10 d5 ♘e5 *(D)*

11 ♘xe5

White's centre has been forced to advance, temporarily ceding control of the e5-square. White plans to regain control of this square, and thus restore his centre's mobility, by a later f4 advance. Thus the exchange of knights, clearing the f-pawn's path and luring the bishop out in order to gain a tempo on it, looks absolutely logical. There is some sense in avoiding the knight exchange, in order to keep more pieces on the board; then Black, who has less space, will be more restricted in manoeuvring. But there is no convenient retreat, since 11 ♘d2

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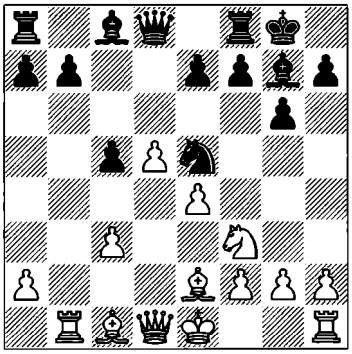

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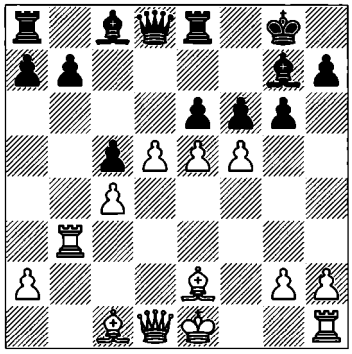

exacerbates White's lag in development, and Black replies 11...f5 and retains active chances.

11...♗xe5 12 ♕d2

While not entirely natural, this is nevertheless the main continuation. For instance, in reply to 12 ♗d2 Black plays 12...♕c7, taking control of the h2-b8 diagonal, hampering both White's castling and f4; Black can then undermine the centre with ...e6 and use the (half-)open e-file for counterplay.

12 c4 doesn't enjoy a great deal of popularity. This is not because it involves a pawn sacrifice (12...♕a5+ 13 ♗d2 ♕xa2 takes a lot of time, and White will obtain compensation), but because the advance of the c-pawn prematurely cedes the d4-square to the enemy bishop, which can be reinforced with ...e5. Despite such a formal minus as the pawns fixed on the squares of the same colour, it is hard to call the d4-bishop bad, unlike the e2-bishop which suffers from the same affliction. The move chosen by White protects c3 and at the same time makes the immediate advance of the f-pawn inevitable.

Sometimes 12 ♖b3 is played, with the idea of transferring the rook to the kingside. This possibility should be paid due attention; as an example we shall mention the game S.Ivanov-V.Mikhalevski, St Petersburg-Beersheba match 1999: 12...e6 13 f4 ♗g7 14 c4 ♖e8 (14...♗d4 is met with 15 ♗b2) 15 e5 f6 16 f5 *(D)* and Black failed to repulse the attack.

We shall see a similar method employing a battering-ram later.

12...e6

Nowadays the pawn sacrifice 12...c4 is undergoing practical tests. If the sacrifice is accepted, the extra pawn is hard to keep: 13 ♗xc4 ♕c7 14 ♕e2 a6 and now 15 ♗d2 seeks to contain Black, but allows him the initiative by 15...♗d7 intending ...♗a4. In Khalifman-Belov, World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2007 White returned the material by 15 0-0 ♗xh2+, but the weakening of the king's cover offset the superiority in the centre. It is wiser to fight for an advantage with 13 f4 or 13 0-0.

12...♕a5 does not enjoy recognition; after the forced 13 ♖b3 Black does not succeed in taking advantage of the rook's position for effective counterplay.

The prophylactic retreat 12...♗g7 *(D)* is more interesting.

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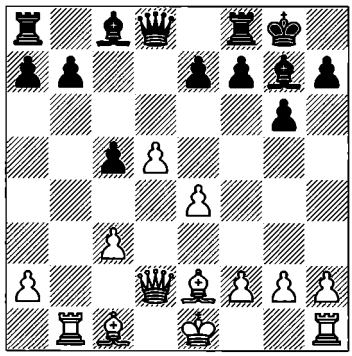

With regard to determining the central pawn-configuration, the move 13 0-0 is considered to be a loss of time, and White strives to save a tempo on castling in the main line. The critical continuation is 13 f4, when, if it isn't to come down to a transposition of moves, Black replies with 13...e5, and only then follows 14 0-0, not wasting time on the defence of the c3-pawn. After 14...exf4 15 ♕xf4 ♕e7 16 ♗c4, with the idea of opening the a2-g8 diagonal for the bishop, White's prospects look better. He also keeps the initiative in the line 13 c4 b6 (13...♗d4 is possible here as well, but after the preceding retreat,

such a move is a loss of time and is psychologically unpleasant to make) 14 ♗b2 e5 15 0-0 ♕d6 16 a4 f5 17 a5 fxe4 18 ♗c3, Gelfand-Sutovsky, Ashdod 2004.

The main rival to the text continuation is 12...b6, removing one of the pawns from attack and overprotecting the other. After 13 f4 ♗g7 *(D)*, White has several set-ups at his disposal:

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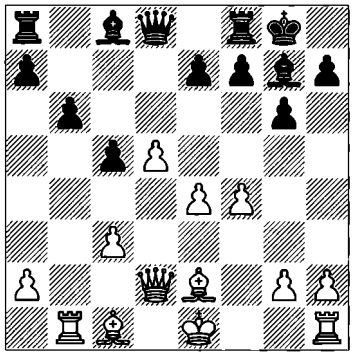

a) White bolsters the centre with 14 c4, but loses the possibility of activating the light-squared bishop via this square. Black retains even chances by setting up a blockade on the dark squares after the exchange of the queens and the dark-squared bishops: 14...e5 (here this move does not close the position; on the contrary, it clears the blockading squares) 15 0-0 exf4 16 ♕xf4 ♕e7 17 ♗b2 ♗xb2 18 ♖xb2 ♗d7 19 ♗d3 and now 19...f6 or 19...♖ae8 preparing ...♕e5.

b) 14 0-0 is naturally met by the freeing 14...e6 *(D)*. Now:

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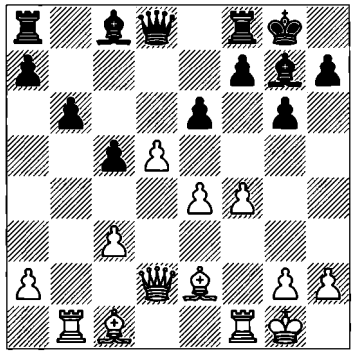

b1) The d-pawn can go forward by 15 d6, but supporting it is complicated, and the counterattack against the vanguard cut off from the main forces gives Black fully adequate chances after playing 15...e5 16 ♗c4 ♗e6 at once or following the preliminary 15...♗b7 (not fearing 16 e5 f6 17 ♕e3 fxe5 18 fxe5 ♕h4) 16 ♗f3 e5.

b2) White can exchange on e6 with a subsequent f5, viz. 15 dxe6, meeting 15...♗xe6 with 16 f5. Then taking on a2 is bad: 16...♕xd2? 17 ♗xd2 gxf5 18 exf5 ♗xa2 19 ♖b2 ♗d5 20 f6 ♗h8 21 ♗h6 followed by ♖f4 with an extremely strong attack. Therefore a retreat is forced. If 16...♗d7, then 17 f6 ♗xf6 18 ♖xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♕xd7 and the bishop-pair plus dark-squared holes in Black's position promise White a clear advantage. That leaves 16...♗c8, but the ending after 17 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 18 ♗g5 f6 19 ♗c4+ ♔h8 20 ♗h4 ♗b7 21 ♖be1 ♖d2 22 ♖f2 also fails to inspire Black with optimism. Having failed to find equality in these lines, Black began playing 15...fxe6 16 ♕e3 ♕e7 17 ♗c4 ♔h8. To prevent Black from getting rid of his weakness with ...e5, White himself plays 18 e5, and in the resulting position both sides have defects in their pawn-structure, with mutual chances.

b3) 15 ♗c4. Black cannot tolerate the enemy bishop on d5, while yet another version of the 15...e5 advance also favours White. However, a temporary pawn sacrifice provides sufficient counterplay: 15...♗b7 16 dxe6 ♗xe4 17 exf7+ ♔h8 18 ♖b2 ♕xd2 19 ♗xd2 ♖ad8 20 ♖e1 and now 20...♗d3 21 ♗xd3 (or 21 ♗e6 b5) 21...♖xd3 leads to a drawn rook endgame. Instead, 20...♖xd2? runs into a pretty refutation: 21 ♖xd2 ♗xc3 22 ♖d8! and White gains a decisive tempo, Wells-Krasenkow, Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 1996.

13 f4 ♗c7

In the recent past Black's main retreat was 13...♗g7 *(D)*.

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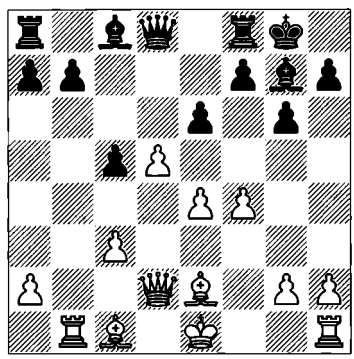

By refraining from ...b6, Black saves a tempo that can be used in the counterattack against White's pawn-centre. The lines 14 dxe6 ♗xe6 and 14 ♗c4 ♕a5 now look more acceptable to him, while in case of 14 d6 he can return to line 'b1' of the previous note, where he has decent counterplay, by playing 14...b6 15 0-0.

That's why it is only natural that 14 c4 *(D)* became the main continuation.

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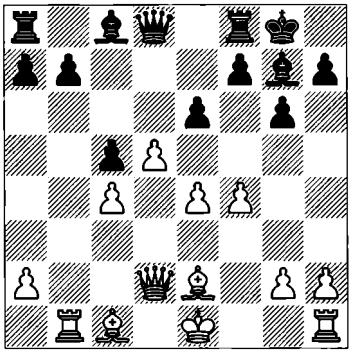


White's intentions are clear. If allowed to, he will castle, offer an exchange of the dark-squared bishops (the order of these steps can be reversed), and then play e5. In case of the exchange on d5 he must be ready to recapture with the c-pawn, and the other bishop will work well from f3.

In the lines we examined above, Black's principal counter-argument to this was the ...e5 advance. It is obvious that with ...e6 already played, this move would now cost Black a tempo, with the result that he wouldn't have the time to set up a dark-squared blockade. His only try is to prove that the white army is not ready to support the centre in an effective manner, and that the centre can be destroyed. We shall examine the following continuations:

a) 14...b6 prepares the development of the bishop to a6, from where it forces White to keep defending the c4-pawn, or to b7, putting pressure on the d5-pawn. Now:

a1) 15 0-0 allows 15...exd5 16 cxd5 ♗d4+ 17 ♔h1 and now Black can play 17...♗b7 with the threat of ...f5, while the immediate 17...f5 18 e5 ♕xd5 19 ♗f3 ♕c4 20 ♗b2 is also possible, with unclear complications.

a2) 15 ♗b2 ♗xb2 16 ♖xb2 (16 ♕xb2 weakens the d5-pawn, and Black has an interesting sacrifice of a whole rook: 16...exd5 17 cxd5 ♖e8 18 e5 ♕xd5 19 ♗f3 ♕c4 20 ♗xa8 ♕xf4 21 ♗f3 ♖xe5+ 22 ♔f1 ♕e3 with ample compensation, Khuzman-Sutovsky, Tel Aviv 1999) 16...♗a6 17 0-0 exd5 18 cxd5 ♗xe2 19 ♕xe2 and now 19...f5 destroys the centre. After 20 ♖d2 fxe4 the topic of the discussion changes: now White has to prove the merits of the strong, yet isolated, passed d-pawn.

b) Black can exchange on d5 immediately by 14...exd5 15 cxd5 ♗d4. The idea of the variation is based on this move – White's castling is delayed, and the frontal defence of the d5-pawn is disrupted. Nothing better than 16 ♗b2 comes to mind, and the search for counterplay follows in two directions:

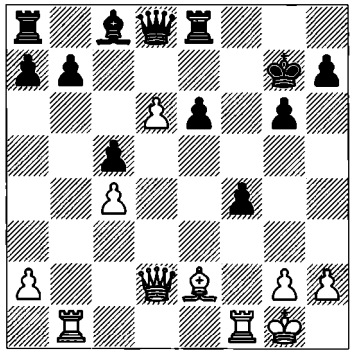
b1) 16...♕h4+ (in order to open the diagonal, so that the possible capture of the d5-pawn may gain a tempo in comparison with playing 16...♕e7) 17 g3 ♕e7 18 e5 (unclear complications arise after 18 ♗f3 ♗f5) 18...♕d8 19 ♗f3 ♗f5 20 ♖c1. Black's sorties are over; the achievements are the development of the bishop to f5 and forcing g3, a move that exposes the king's possible residence still more. The preparations for a further advance of the centre pawns require time, and as a counterbalance Black tries to rush his queenside pawns forward after 20...♗xb2 21 ♕xb2 ♕b6. Nevertheless, White's chances are to be preferred.

b2) The pin 16...♕b6 also does not equalize. The ending after 17 ♗d3 c4 18 ♗xc4 ♖e8 19 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 20 ♗xd4 ♖xe4+ 21 ♔d2 ♖xd4+ 22 ♔c3 ♖xf4 is difficult for Black, despite his extra pawn, as the passed d-pawn is not easy to stop.

c) 14...♖e8 prepares an exchange of pawns. Here the rook exerts masked pressure on the e4-pawn but gives up the control of the f-file, along which active operations are planned. White must advance by 15 e5, when Black achieves his idea with 15...f6. The centre cannot be maintained, so White endeavours to transform the lost pluses into newly acquired ones, specifically the strong passed pawn, the more active pieces and the insecure position of the black king. For that a pawn must be sacrificed: 16 d6 fxe5 17 ♗b2 exf4 (17...e4, so as not to open the f-file, has also been tested, but equality failed to materialize) 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 0-0 *(D)*.

For the moment Black is two pawns to the good, it's his move and the question arises – can't he keep both?

B



c1) 19...g5 makes too many holes in the king's cover. White must take advantage of it after 20 ♖fd1 ♕d7 21 ♕c3+.

c2) 19...e5 opens the h3-c8 diagonal, and Black suffers material losses: 20 d7 ♕xd7 21 ♕xd7+ ♗xd7 22 ♖xb7 ♖e7 23 ♖d1 ♖d8 24 ♗g4.

c3) For a while the position after 19...♖f8 20 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 21 ♕xf4 ♕f6 was considered tolerable, until a long line, resulting in an endgame with a white bishop versus three black pawns, crystallized: 22 ♕e4 ♖b8 23 ♖f1 ♕d4+ 24 ♕xd4+ cxd4 25 ♖b1 ♗d7 26 ♗f3 b6 27 c5 ♖c8 28 c6 ♗xc6 29 ♖c1 ♗d7 30 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 31 ♗c6 *(D)*.

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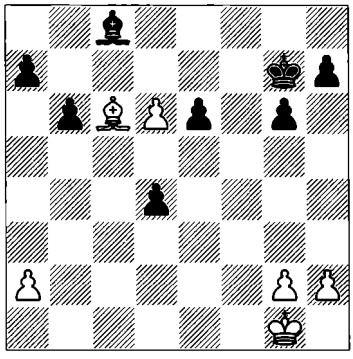
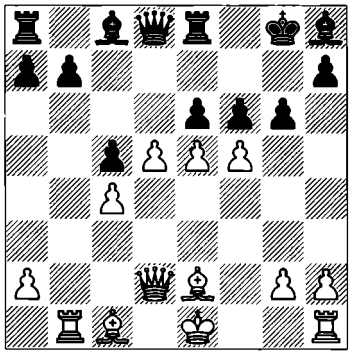


The ending was thought to be drawn until Novikov employed a novelty on the 36th move (which was a record in the pre-computer chess) and proved that White wins: 31...♔f6 32 d7 ♗xd7 33 ♗xd7 e5 34 ♔f2 e4 35 ♗c6 ♔e5 36 h4!, Novikov-Tukmakov, USSR Ch, Lvov 1984.

The line we have just seen featured a catastrophe due to the pin along the 7th rank. Human ingenuity being what it is, this problem gave birth to the idea of avoiding it by 13...♗h8. Now after the bishop exchange the king will wind up on the eighth rank, and it will be possible to defend the f4-pawn with ...e5. A few games turned out well for Black, until the discovery of the blow that effectively buried this idea: 14 c4 ♖e8 15 e5 f6 16 f5!! *(D)*, McCambridge-Hjartarson, Grindavik 1984.

B



It transpired that the position of the bishop on h8 presents White with an important tempo, and he has a decisive attack after 16...gxf5 17 ♖b3, and also 16...fxe5 17 fxg6 (but not 17 fxe6? ♕h4+ 18 g3 ♕e4), as well as 16...exd5 17 e6 (or 17 fxg6).

We now return to 13...♗c7 *(D)*:

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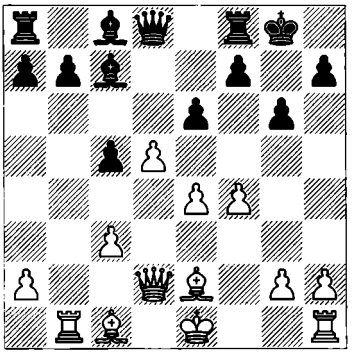

As Black's problems after the retreat of the bishop along the long diagonal grew, so did the popularity of the text-move.

14 0-0

As 14 c4 is impossible, White must acquiesce to the recapture with the e4-pawn in case of an exchange on d5, or else play 14 ♗c4, although on this square the bishop facilitates Black's counterplay. The usual reply is 14...a6 (Black doesn't have enough time to set up the well-known blockade with 14...e5 because White replies 15 ♕f2 ♕f6 16 0-0 exf4 17 ♗xf4 ♗xf4

18 ♕xf4 ♕xc3 19 e5 with the advantage). Now:

a) After the exchange 15 dxe6 ♕xd2+ 16 ♗xd2 fxe6, thanks to the attack on f4 Black manages to carry out ...b5, and his pawn-structure is in no respect worse than White's.

b) In reply to 15 a4 there is a choice between 15...♕e8 16 ♕a2 ♖b8 and the pawn sacrifice 15...b5 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♗xb5 exd5 (17...♗b7!?) 18 ♗c6 ♖a6 with decent compensation.

14...exd5 15 exd5 ♗a5 *(D)*

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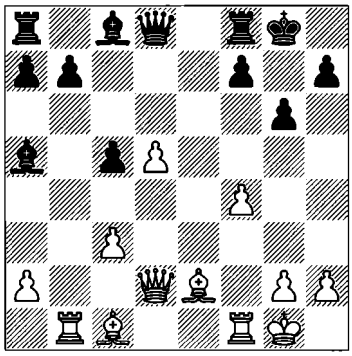


This is the next stage of the voyage begun with the retreat to c7. The bishop has helped to relieve the tension in the centre but found itself removed from the weakened squares around its king. Given that it is hard for it to return to the fianchetto, the bishop attempts to aggravate the poor coordination of the white pieces by hobbling and attacking the c3-pawn. It is not easy for White to rearrange his forces, but it must be mentioned that he may find that a small force is sufficient for a successful attack; for example, a pawn on f6 and the queen.

16 f5

This is the main continuation today. Black is forced to capture this pawn with his bishop, so White immediately solves the problem of how to activate the b1-rook.

But let's examine some of the other continuations that have been tested:

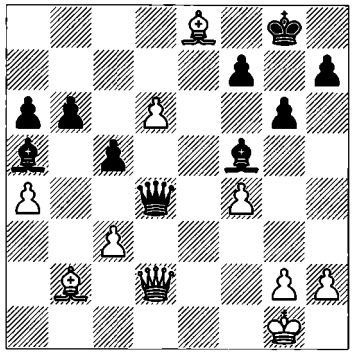
a) The most radical method of fighting the a5-bishop is 16 ♖b5. White has a strong attack after 16...a6 17 ♖xa5 ♕xa5 18 f5, but Black has the solid 16...b6 17 ♖xa5 bxa5 18 c4 ♖b8, when in reply to 19 ♗b2 Black starts operations on the b-file, blocking the diagonal with ...f6 first, if necessary. If White decides to treat himself to the c5-pawn with 19 ♗a3, the counter-sacrifice 19...♖b4 secures Black an excellent position.

b) 16 ♗a3 is at first sight strange. What is it going to do there after 16...b6? The logic is as follows: White needs to rearrange his forces, and he'd like to let the rook pass through but is reluctant to put the bishop on b2, as that fails to hinder Black's plans (which include the advances ...b5 and ...c4, securing the bishop a deluxe base on b6), so White temporarily moves it to a3 (from where it can, given the right opportunity, force the exchange with ♗b4), especially because ...b6 somewhat loosens the light squares, and the other bishop can seek a better future on b5 or f3.

c) 16 ♖b3 initiates another regrouping plan. White relieves the queen from the defence of c3 and intends to retreat it, to restore the pawn's mobility and to open the third rank for the rook. Of interest is the exchange sacrifice 16...b6 17 ♕d1 ♗d7 18 c4 ♗a4 19 ♗b2, when the bishops promise support for the passed pawn, whereas for the moment the black bishop on a5 is operating at half capacity.

d) 16 d6 is the main rival to the move in the game. An interesting debate has developed in the line 16...b6 17 ♗f3 ♗f5 (at the right moment, when the rook has no decent move) 18 ♗xa8 ♗xb1 19 ♗c6 ♕f6 20 ♗b2. Accepting the pawn offer by 20...♗xa2? is bad, since after 21 c4! ♕e6 22 f5 the attack is hard to repulse, so the best defence is 20...♗f5 21 ♖e1 ♖d8 22 ♖e8+ ♖xe8 23 ♗xe8 a6 24 a4 ♕d4+ *(D)*.

W



This last move is not mandatory, of course. The win of a piece with 25 cxd4 ♗xd2 26 d7 ♗xd7 27 ♗xd7 leads to a draw after 27...c4, but the sharp four-bishop endgame leaves White

with the better chances: 25 ♕xd4 cxd4 26 d7 b5 27 cxd4, Khalifman-V.Mikhalevski, St Petersburg-Beersheba match 1999.

16...♗xf5 17 ♖xb7 ♕f6 *(D)*

After the events of this game, the queen's longer route to the long diagonal, i.e. 17...♕d6 18 ♗c4 ♕e5, should be recognized as the safer one. White succumbed to a decisive attack after 19 ♖e1? ♕f6 20 ♖b3 ♕h4 21 ♗f1 c4 22 ♖b5 ♗b6+ 23 ♔h1 ♗c7 in Obodchuk-Sutovsky, Turin Olympiad 2006. In a recent encounter our silicon friend preferred 19 ♖f3 ♖ab8 20 ♖xa7 ♗b6 21 ♖a4 ♗c7 22 g3 ♖b1, but the black rook's position on White's back rank proved adequate compensation for the pawn in *Deep Fritz-Deep Junior*, Elista 2007.

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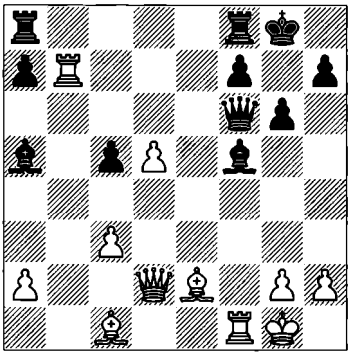
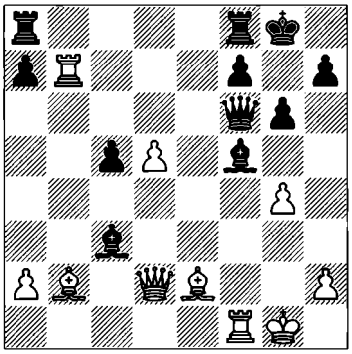


18 g4

This aggressive thrust is a naturally tempting idea, though it used to be underestimated. Previously 18 ♗b2 was more common.

18...♗xc3 19 ♗b2 *(D)*

B



19...♗xb2

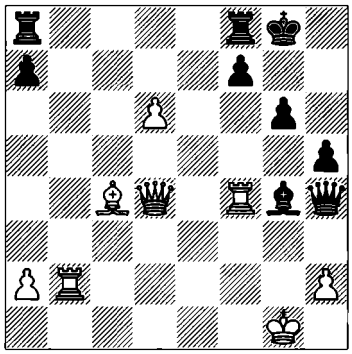
It turns out that after 19...♗xd2 20 ♗xf6 the passed pawn, combined with the attack on f7, secures White a perceptible advantage. In order to save the piece, Black is forced to display considerable ingenuity.

20 ♖xb2 c4 21 ♗xc4

The rook must control the b6-square, while the queen monitors d4. Anyway, a more sensible way to prevent ...c3 is not apparent.

21...♕h4 22 ♖f4 ♗xg4 23 ♕d4 h5 24 d6 *(D)*

B



The strong passed pawn, the attack on f7 and the great difference in piece activity suggest that the position can be evaluated as clearly favouring White. If only the king had better cover...

24...♖ac8

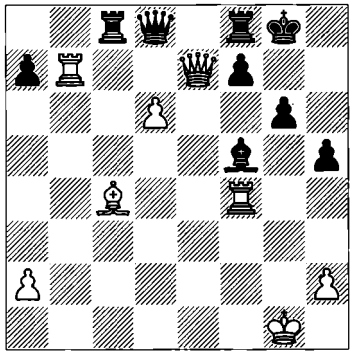
Black trains his sights on the terribly strong c4-bishop and neutralizes 25 d7.

25 ♕e5

This move, forestalling all checks and threatening ♕e7, looks very strong but allows Black to rearrange his pieces. Black also has good drawing chances in the ending after 25 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 26 ♗xf7+ ♔h7 27 ♗c4 ♕g5 28 h4 ♕c1+ 29 ♗f1 ♕c5.

25...♕d8 26 ♖b7 ♗f5 27 ♕e7 *(D)*

B



27...♖xc4

Black's desire to eliminate such a bishop is understandable, but 27...♔g7, defending against

the capture on f7 by removing the king from check, is simpler.

28 ♖xc4 ♕a5 29 d7 ♕d2 *(D)*

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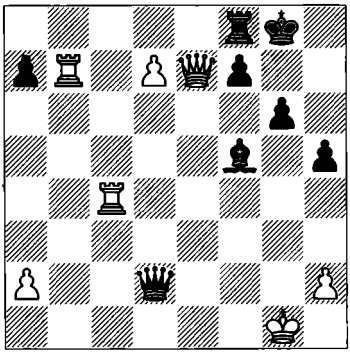
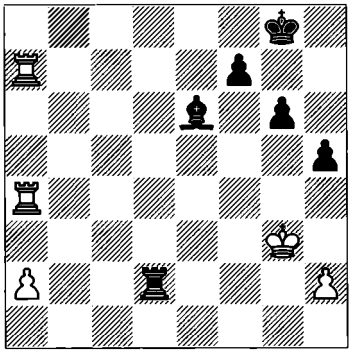


30 d8♕

The king's voyage to the queenside by 30 ♖c8 ♕d4+ 31 ♔f1 ♗h3+ 32 ♔e1 ♕g1+ is too romantic, but the endgame doesn't promise much because Black's position is extremely solid.

30...♕xd8 31 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 32 ♖xa7 ♖d1+ 33 ♔f2 ♖d2+ 34 ♔g3 ♗e6 35 ♖ca4 *(D)*

B



35...♔g7?!

More accurate is 35...♖d3+ and only after 36 ♔f4 to play 36...♔g7. Now after 37 h4 ♔f6 it is White who is more likely to have problems as the h-pawn is in danger, while in the line 38 ♖a3 ♖d4+ 39 ♔g3 ♖g4+ 40 ♔h3 Black at the very least has a perpetual check.

36 h4 ♖d3+ 37 ♔f2 ♖d2+ 38 ♔f3 ♖d3+ 39 ♔g2

Black has fair drawing chances, but White could have at least tested him by 39 ♔e4.

39...♖d2+ ½-½

Game 16 [D85]

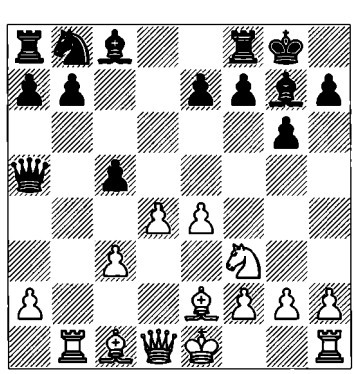
Boris Gelfand – Alexei Shirov

Odessa (rapid) 2007

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♘f3 c5 8 ♖b1 0-0 9 ♗e2 cxd4

The same idea of the queen raid can also be carried out without exchanging the pawns, viz. 9...♕a5 *(D)*.

W



Let's examine White's options:

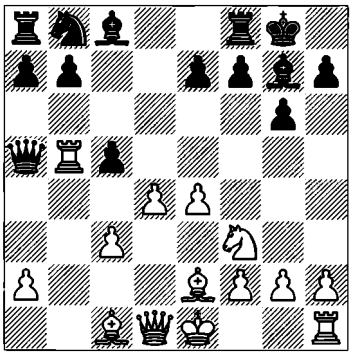
a) 10 ♕d2 foregoes any sacrifices but agrees to the exchange of the queens, which we shall encounter later. Black does not have to hurry with the exchange, and can deploy his forces according to the standard pattern – ...a6, ...b5, ...♘c6, ...♖d8, ...♗g4 with pressure on the d4-pawn, taking advantage of the fact that it is temporarily hobbled as long as its neighbour on c3 is insufficiently protected.

b) 10 ♗d2 invites a return to the main line. Black would be wise to accept the invitation and include the exchange on d4; when White plays d5 the presence of the c-pawns on the board is rather in his favour, as the prop on c4 will reinforce the central bastion, while Black's queenside counterplay develops more slowly.

c) 10 ♖b5 *(D)* is the move that one's hand automatically stretches out to make, but unlike the variation examined in Game 14, where the queen sortie to a5 took place a move earlier, the

situation is more favourable to Black, whose castling is more useful than the bishop's development to e2. The capture of either pawn is possible here:

B



c1) The one closer to the centre looks tastier, especially since the loot is real: 10...♕xc3+ 11 ♗d2 ♕a3. Now a queen hunt is pointless, the c8-bishop is protected, and 12 ♕c2 can be met with the simple 12...cxd4. In case of 12 ♖xc5 the attack on the d4-pawn secures Black an excellent game: 12...♘c6 13 ♖c4 ♗g4 14 d5 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♘d4. More cunning is 12 ♖a5 ♕b2 13 ♖xc5 and now Black usually takes the pawn with 13...♕xa2, although White's compensation is not bad. The less mercenary 13...♘a6 (as played by Leko), aiming for rapid development, has also been tested.

c2) 10...♕xa2 is also possible. This doesn't win a pawn, but the queen's time-expenditure is balanced by the rook's expedition. Each side has to worry about the return of his commando home, and there are chances for both sides.

d) The most natural move is 10 0-0, again offering Black two pawns to choose from:

d1) Following 'tradition', let's start with the capture 10...♕xc3. Now a position similar to the one examined in line 'c1' can be reached via 11 ♖b3 ♕a5 12 ♖b5 ♕xa2 13 ♖xc5; the difference is in Black's favour, but this has no crucial importance. The main continuations for White feature either play against the enemy queen or play in the centre. In the first case the pawn has to be returned but the problems remain: 11 ♗d2 ♕a3 12 ♕c2 ♗d7 13 dxc5 ♗c6 14 ♗b5 ♘a6 15 ♖fc1. The line 11 d5 gives fewer causes for worry; for example, 11...♕a5 12 ♗g5 ♕c7 13 ♕d2 ♗g4 14 e5 ♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♗xe5 16 d6 ♗xd6 17 ♖xb7 ♕c8 18 ♖bb1?! ♘c6 19 ♕d5 ♘d4?! (19...♖b8!) 20 ♕xa8 ♕f5 21 ♕d5 ♘xf3+ 22 ♕xf3 ♕xg5, P.H.Nielsen-Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2005.

d2) This time the capture of the rook's pawn is more common: 10...♕xa2. Now 11 ♗g5 gets the bishop to g5 in one move, without the stopover on d2, and it is harder for Black to equalize than with the main move-order. Now:

d21) The endgame resulting from 11...♕e6 12 e5 (12 ♕d3 also promises an advantage) 12...♖d8 13 ♕a4 ♕c6 14 ♕b3 ♗e6 15 c4 cxd4 16 ♗xe7 ♖c8 17 ♘xd4 ♗xc4 18 ♘xc6 ♗xb3 19 ♘xb8 ♗e6 20 ♗d6 is closer to a draw, Black can give up the exchange in two ways, but in both cases some suffering is unavoidable: 20...♖axb8 or 20...♗f8 21 ♗f3 ♗xd6 22 ♗xb7 ♗xb8 23 ♗xa8 ♗xe5.

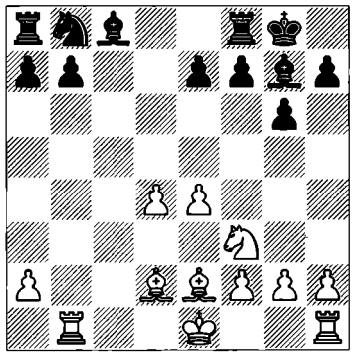
d22) 11...♘d7 deserves more attention than it has received. After 12 ♗xe7 ♖e8 13 ♗d6 cxd4 14 ♘xd4 ♘f6 15 f3 the pawn-centre has disappeared, leaving White with the more active pieces, but Black is not without chances either.

10 cxd4 ♕a5+ 11 ♗d2

White gives up the a2-pawn but hopes to show that the time gained, and the exposed position of the black queen, provide good compensation.

If White is not in a gambit mood, he must agree to the previously-mentioned exchange of the queens by 11 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 12 ♗xd2 *(D)*.

B

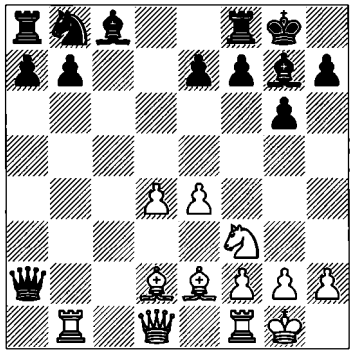


The search for an advantage for White was carried out at the highest level, but Black held out; the line is considered acceptable for him and is seen rarely in the practice of recent years. To some degree, the explanation lies in the fact that for the subsequent struggle the move ♖b1 turns out to be a loss of a tempo. With the queens gone, White has to forget

about attacking the enemy king, but there are still a lot of pieces on the board, and the attempt to obtain an 'extra king' in the centre is risky for White, so his majesty has to take a trip to the suburbs. From b1, an effective invasion on c7 cannot be arranged, so Black is able to neutralize the c-file. The pawn-centre will have to be transformed into a passed d-pawn, and it is this pawn that will be the main subject of the discussion. We shall illustrate this with the following example: 12...e6 13 0-0 b6 14 ♖fd1 ♗b7 15 d5 exd5 16 exd5 ♘d7 17 ♗b4 ♖fc8 18 ♗e7 ♗f6 19 d6 ♔g7, Karpov-Kasparov, World Ch match (game 13), Seville 1987.

11...♕xa2 12 0-0 *(D)*

B



Most of the games in the system with ♖b1 pass through this position with its typical opening debate about which takes precedence: the superiority in the centre or the extra pawn. The main line is...

12...♗g4

Before examining this move further, we shall take a look at Black's other options in increasing order of popularity:

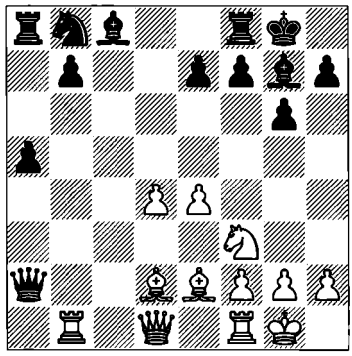
a) 12...♗d7 is a somewhat unexpected move, voluntarily returning the pawn at once, in order to vacate the square for the rook and quickly generate counterplay along the c-file. However, White's presence on the seventh rank has created the preconditions for several impressive routs; here is one: 13 ♖xb7 ♖c8 (attacking the e4-pawn by 13...♗c6 leads to complications that favour White: 14 ♖xe7 ♕a3 15 ♗g5) 14 ♗g5 h6 15 ♗h4 (but not 15 ♗xe7? ♕e6) 15...♗c6 16 ♖xe7 ♗f8 17 d5 ♗a4 18 ♕d3 g5 19 ♗xg5 hxg5 20 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 21 ♘xg5+ ♔e7 22 e5 ♗c2 23 ♕f3 1-0 Shipov-V.Ivanov, Petrosian Memorial, Moscow 1995.

b) The active-looking 12...♘c6, inviting the d-pawn forward, is rarely seen, as the queen's way back home can become quite long, despite the fact that the g7-bishop is now included in her defence.

c) Out of several possible methods of developing the knight, the most common is the modest 12...♘d7. The knight is then transferred to b6, where it blocks the pressure along the b-file and controls important squares; on the other hand, it is removed from the attack on the white centre. After 13 ♗b4 ♘b6 14 ♖a1 ♕e6 15 ♕b1 ♗d7 16 ♖a5 Black must defend carefully.

d) Black can pin his hopes on his passed pawn and immediately set it in motion by 12...a5 *(D)*. Meanwhile, the queen remains in the danger zone.

W

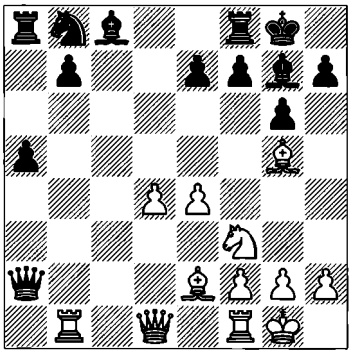


d1) The attempt to take advantage of that by 13 ♕c1 is met with a counterattack in the centre: 13...♗g4 (the evacuation by 13...♕e6 looks riskier: 14 ♗c4 ♕xe4 and after 15 ♗xf7+ or 15 ♖e1 White wields a serious initiative) 14 ♗c4 ♕a4 15 ♖xb7 ♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♘c6 17 ♗b5 ♕xb5 18 ♖xb5 ♘xd4. Now White didn't risk entering the line 19 ♕c5 ♘xf3+ 20 ♔g2 ♘xd2 21 ♖e1 a4, where he has extra material but Black has a strong passed pawn, and instead returned the queen by 19 ♖xa5 leading shortly to a draw in Kramnik-Leko, Dortmund 1996.

d2) 13 d5 is the other attempt to exploit the queen's position, by cutting off its line of retreat. Sharp play commences after 13...a4 14 ♕c1 b5 15 ♖xb5 ♗a6 16 ♗c4 ♗b2, trying to hold on with the help of tactics. The win of two pieces for a rook leads to an unclear game: 17 ♗xa2 ♗xc1 18 ♖xb8 ♖fxb8 19 ♖xc1 ♖b2 20 ♖a1; in such a configuration the passed a-pawn is usually worth a considerable amount.

d3) 13 ♗g5 *(D)* is the most unpleasant continuation for Black.

B



He has two ways to swap the e7-pawn for the one on e4, but neither yields equality:

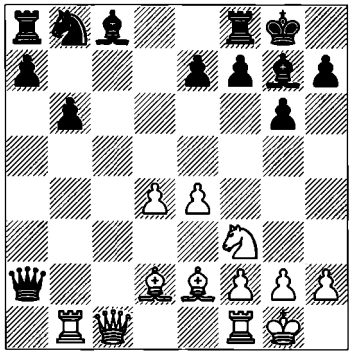
d31) 13...a4 14 ♗xe7 ♖e8 15 ♗d6 ♖xe4 16 ♖c1 ♘c6 (16...♗e6 17 ♗d3) 17 ♗c4 ♕b2 18 ♖b1 ♕c3 19 ♗xf7+.

d32) 13...h6 places g5 under control at once, but then the queen is in danger, and in most lines the exchange has to be given up without sufficient compensation as well: 14 ♗xe7 ♖e8 15 ♗d6 ♖xe4 16 ♖c1 and now 16...♘c6 17 ♗c4 ♕b2 18 ♖b1 ♕c3 19 ♗d5 ♖xd4 20 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 21 ♕e1, 16...♕e6 17 ♗d3 or 16...♗g4 17 ♗c4 ♕b2 18 h3 (18 ♗c5!?) 18...♖xd4 19 ♕e1.

e) Immediately bringing the queen back by 12...♕e6 leads to a less stormy course of events, but the queen is placed poorly on this square, gets in the way of everything else, and White systematically builds up the pressure. We shall give the game Lautier-Seger, Bundesliga 2002/3 as an example: 13 ♕c2 ♕c6 14 ♕d3 (14 ♗c4 is also possible) 14...♕d6 15 d5 ♘d7 16 ♗b4 ♘c5 17 ♕e3 b6 18 ♖fd1 ♗g4 19 e5 ♕c7 20 ♖e1 ♖ad8 21 ♖bd1 ♗c8 22 ♖d4 ♗b7 23 ♗c4 ♕b8 24 h4. Having gained unequivocal superiority in the centre and tied Black's forces down, White prepares to open a second front on the kingside.

f) 12...b6 is a solid continuation, preparing the natural development of the bishop and blocking the b-file. The queen will remain behind the enemy's lines for as long as possible to reduce White's freedom of action. This is an important idea relevant to many other such opening lines where Black spends time with his queen devouring one of White's queenside pawns: the queen can also have considerable nuisance value, a factor which is squandered if the queen retreats unprovoked. White usually replies with 13 ♕c1 *(D)*, not letting the bishop out on a6 and creating real threats to the black queen.

B



How Black countenances these threats will determine his reply:

f1) He can retreat immediately by 13...♕e6. Then:

f11) For a long time the main continuation was 14 ♗c4 with a subsequent sacrifice of exchange and a strong attack: 14...♕xe4 15 ♖e1 ♕b7 16 ♗b4 ♗e6 17 ♖xe6 fxe6 18 ♘g5. However, in the line 18...♘c6 19 ♘xe6 ♔h8 Black started to defend successfully.

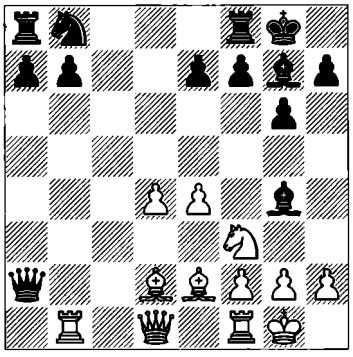
f12) Therefore the move 14 ♖e1 came under scrutiny. However, here too, Black can hold on: 14...♗a6 15 ♗d1 ♗d3 16 ♖b3 ♗c4 17 ♖c3 b5, Gladyszev-Nepomniashchy, Moscow 2006. We should also mention the game Malakhatko-Wang Yue, Balagne 2007, featuring 14...♕xe4, a pawn-grab rejected by the theory. White reacted in a modest manner with 15 ♘e5 and got nothing after 15...♗f5 16 ♕b2 ♘d7. It would be interesting to know what Black had in mind in case of the main 15 ♘g5; after 15...♕xd4 16 ♗f3 ♗f5 17 ♖b4 ♕d6 18 ♗xa8 ♘a6 he recoups some of the losses, but is it enough?

f2) With 13...♗b7, Black gets on with development. No mortal danger threatening the queen is apparent, so she stays in place to make White uncomfortable. This position serves as yet another platform for registering a draw, viz. 14 ♗c4 ♕a4 15 ♗b5 ♕a2 with a repetition. If White has different requirements, he chooses 16 ♖e1 ♖c8 17 ♕d1. Here 17...e6 is sometimes played, when 18 h4, suggested by Ivanchuk, is not bad. If the queen starts to get ready for a

return home with 17...♕c2, then 18 ♕e2 ♕c7 (18...♘c6 has been tested, when 19 ♗d3 ♕a2 20 ♖a1 ♕b2 21 ♖a4 ♕b3 22 ♖ea1 ♘d8 23 ♖1a3 ♕e6 24 ♖xa7 allows White to win back the pawn while keeping a significant part of the accumulated positional pluses) 19 ♖bc1 ♕d8 20 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 21 ♖c1 ♕d8 22 ♗f4. On the whole, having avoided tactical skirmishes, White retains the strategic initiative.

We now return to 12...♗g4 *(D)*:

W



This bishop move is the central avenue of the system.

13 ♗e3

When it became clear that Black is OK with 13 ♖xb7 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♗xd4 15 e5 (lately 15 ♗b4 has been played, when some accuracy is required of Black in order to equalize) 15...♘a6, White turned his gaze to the d2-bishop.

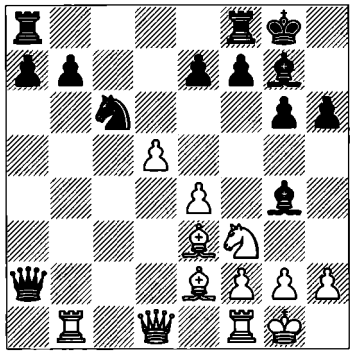
However, instead of the text-move, 13 ♗g5 looks the most active. However, the assault on e7 is not dangerous yet, and so Black can reply 13...h6, without delay inviting the bishop to state on which diagonal he sees his future. Then:

a) Capturing the pawn by 14 ♗xe7 did not remain in practice for long: 14...♖e8 15 ♖xb7 ♘c6 16 ♗c5 ♖xe4 17 ♗d3 ♖xd4 18 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 19 ♗e4 ♖d8 20 ♕b1 ♘e2+ 21 ♔h1 ♕c4 with sufficient compensation, Kramnik-Kasparov, Novgorod 1994.

b) 14 ♗h4 poses more complex problems. Black has no time to defend b7, while ...b6 dangerously weakens the long diagonal, so the correct course is not to cling to the extra pawn but to strive for active counterplay. The attack on the pawn-centre by 14...g5 15 ♗g3 ♘c6 16 d5 ♖ad8 17 ♖xb7 f5 18 ♖c7 fxe4 19 ♖xc6 exf3 20 ♗c4 leaves White with the better chances, but 14...a5, immediately setting this valuable pawn in motion, is more interesting. After 15 ♖xb7 g5 16 ♗g3 a4 the strong passed pawn promises Black good prospects.

c) More often White prefers not to leave the c1-h6 diagonal and retreats with 14 ♗e3, when there generally follows 14...♘c6 15 d5 *(D)*.

B



The difference between this position and the one in the main game is, obviously, the black h-pawn's advance. The evaluation of such a difference is not straightforward, and in some lines it favours White, while in others his opponent. If Black carries out a plan similar to the one in this game, then after 15...♘a5 the bishop is deprived of the g5-square, which can be assessed as a feather in Black's cap. Thus White plays 16 ♗c5, when in the variation 16...♗f6, which for a time used to be the main line, 17 e5 ♗xe5 18 ♖b4 ♗xf3 19 ♗xf3 ♖ae8 20 ♗e3 ♘c4 21 ♗xh6 allows White to take advantage of the h6-pawn's position. However, these days 16...b6 is played, with the same ideas as in the game; then the placement of the h-pawn has no substantial significance. 15...♘a5 is not the only move, but the game Bacrot-McShane, Biel 2004 cast doubt on the attempt to use the pin on the d-pawn: 15...♖fd8 16 ♖xb7 e6 17 ♖c7 ♗xf3 18 ♗xf3 ♘e5 19 d6 ♗f8 20 ♗c5; on the other hand, 15...♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♘d4 17 ♗d3 a5 18 f4 b5 leads to uncompromising play, with winning chances for both sides.

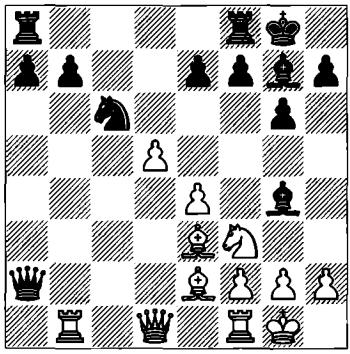
13...♘c6 14 d5 *(D)*

14...♘a5

The availability of the move ♗g5 works out to White's advantage after 14...♖fd8, as well as in the line 14...♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♘e5 16 ♗e2 ♘c4 17 ♗g5.

15 ♗g5

B



The attack on e7 from this side looks better; at the very least 15...♗f6 is ruled out due to the loss of control over the a1-square.

15...b6 *(D)*

Black can also defend the pawn, by 15...♕a3. Thanks to his superiority in the centre, White retains compensation for it after 16 ♗d2 ♗c3 17 ♗c1 ♕d6 18 e5 or 16 ♖e1 ♗xf3 17 ♗xf3 ♕d6 18 ♕e2 ♗e5 19 g3, although Black has his fair share of the play too.

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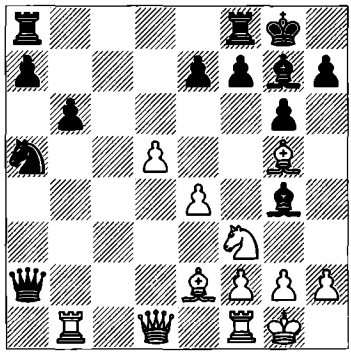


16 ♗xe7

It is not apparent what else can be added, and White embarks on the familiar operation involving the win of the exchange.

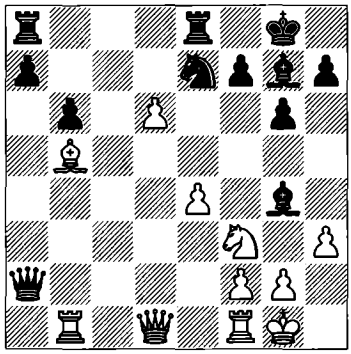
16...♖fe8 17 d6 ♘c6 18 ♗b5 ♘xe7 19 h3 *(D)*

An attempt to improve on the game Gelfand-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2006, where 19 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 20 dxe7 ♕a3 21 h3 ♗xf3 22 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 occurred, with a quick draw.

To untangle his pieces, Black must make a preparatory move; that's why White can keep the queens on the board, and he hopes that this will give him a chance to fight for an advantage.

19...♗xf3 20 ♕xf3 ♕e6 21 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 22 dxe7 ♖xe7

B



Thus White has won the exchange for a pawn, but on the other hand Black has a strong bishop and two passed pawns. They are not difficult to blockade, but White's advantage can be proven only by advancing his pawn-majority in the centre, and this is not easy to carry out and it involves risk for his own king.

23 ♖fe1 ♗d4

The bishop is transferred to the ideal post on c5, where it is protected, puts pressure on f2, keeps three files closed to the enemy rooks and supports the a-pawn in its desire to advance as far as possible. Black plans an exchange of rooks, as his own has no great role to play while White's attacking chances will be decreased.

24 ♖bd1 ♕e5 25 ♖d3 a5 26 ♕d1 ♗c5 *(D)*

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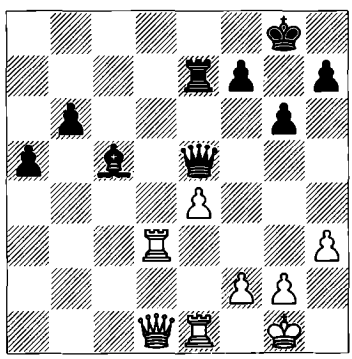

27 ♖e2?!

27 ♖d5 deserved consideration, taking advantage of the fact that 27...♕f4?? is impossible due to 28 ♖xc5 bxc5 29 ♕d8+. The upshot is that White could have advanced in the centre.

27...♖e6 28 g3 ♖d6 29 ♔g2 ♖xd3 30 ♕xd3 a4 31 ♖d2 a3 32 ♕c4 ♔g7 33 ♖d7 ♕f6 34 f4

White has to make up his mind whether to advance or retreat. The king's position on h4 seemed to him secure enough.

34...♕b2+ 35 ♔f3 ♕f2+ 36 ♔g4 h5+ 37 ♔h4 g5+ 38 fxg5 ♔g6 *(D)*

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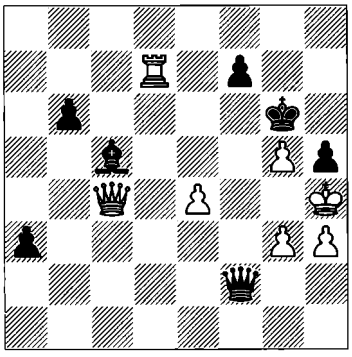


Oops! Suddenly a terrible check on f4 is threatened, whereas the totally exposed black king is for the moment out of White's reach.

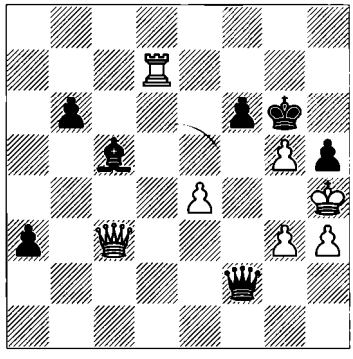
39 ♕c3?

39 ♖d3! holds: 39...a2 40 ♕d5 a1♕ 41 ♕c6+ ♗d6! 42 ♖xd6+ ♔h7! 43 ♖h6+ ♔g7 44 ♕e8 ♕xg3+ and Black gives perpetual check. But only a computer could be expected to find such a resource over the board, especially in a rapid game.

39...f6?! *(D)*

It appears that 39...a2! is more precise: 40 ♖d2 f6 is no good, while in the line 40 ♖a7 a1♕ 41 ♖xa1 f6 42 gxf6 ♗d4 43 ♖f1 ♕xf1 44 ♕xd4 b5 White, even though it is his turn to move, has to pick one of several lost pawn endings.

W



40 ♖d5

The endgame after 40 gxf6 ♕xf6+ 41 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 42 ♔xh5 b5 43 ♖c7 ♗f8! (Nunn) should be winning for Black, because his pawns are too fast.

40...a2 41 ♖f5?!

White misses his last chance: 41 ♖xc5 bxc5 42 ♕e5 – an attractive stalemate idea, isn't it? A study of the queen ending after 42...fxg5+ 43 ♕xg5+ would take too much space and not be relevant to the purpose of this book, so we shall stop at this point. At first sight, the black king escapes the checks, and the a-pawn must decide the game.

41...♕f4+ *(D)*

41...a1♕!? is an even more effective version of the same idea.

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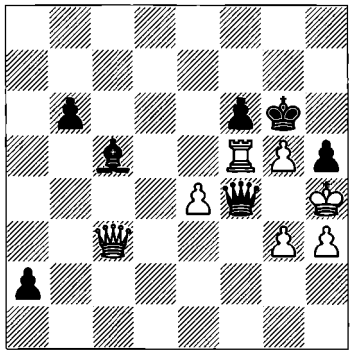


Both pretty and effective. The rest requires no commentary; the b6-pawn is protected indirectly, so White doesn't get to even dream about building a fortress.

42 gxf4 ♗f2+ 43 ♕g3 ♗xg3+ 44 ♔xg3 a1♕ 45 ♖xf6+ ♔g7 46 e5 b5 47 ♔h4 b4 48 ♔xh5 ♕d1+ 49 ♔h4 b3 50 e6 b2 51 ♖f7+ ♔g8 52 ♖b7 b1♕ 53 ♖xb1 ♕xb1 54 ♔g4 ♕e4 0-1

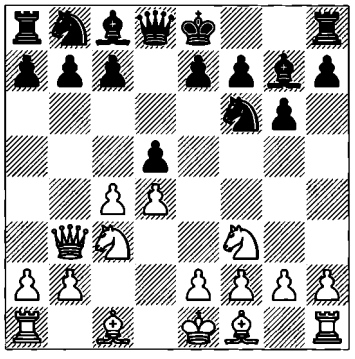
Let's sum up the conclusions in the system with ♖b1. Black feels secure enough both in the 9...♘c6 variation with the subsequent retreat of the bishop to c7 (Game 15) and when he takes the a2-pawn (Game 16).

The general impression from the practice of the last few years is that White is getting fed up with such play, and today's fashion follows a different direction. However, there are still plenty of interesting possibilities for both sides, and the last chapter of the ♖b1 story has definitely yet to be written.

6 Russian System: White Plays ♕b3

Besides the most natural method of seizing the centre examined in the previous chapters, there is one that is more refined – to make the d5-pawn an offer to take on c4 that it cannot refuse, thereby removing the obstacles to the e4 advance. The first idea to present itself is increasing the pressure with the queen's leap to b3 – at once or after a preliminary check on a4. Both of these continuations are available after the development of the king's knight as well, so there are fewer move-order issues if White wishes to make this his main weapon against the Grünfeld. Among these possibilities, centre stage is occupied by the variation 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♕b3 *(D)*.

B



The defence by means of 5...e6 involves significant positional concessions (a passive c8-bishop, the weakening of the f6-square) and is not seen in serious practice. 5...c6 is more solid, even though it runs counter to the c-pawn's main functional task – to improve the g7-bishop's view out of the window by attacking the centre with ...c5. Therefore Black usually doesn't get obstinate and gives up the centre by 5...dxc4, hoping to gain compensation in better development by attacking the exposed white queen. After 6 ♕xc4 0-0 7 e4 the main road parts into three branches:

7...a6 prepares an extended fianchetto with the fianchetto of the queen's bishop as well. **Game 17** (Bellaiche-Sutovsky) is devoted to this variation. In the notes we also cover the earlier options (including ♕a4+ ideas) for both sides up to move 7.

7...♗g4, with the traditional Grünfeld counterplay against the d4-pawn, will be examined in **Game 18** (Babula-Navara). This is called the Smyslov System and, as the name suggests, it has a rich heritage and was considered the main line in the 1950s and 1960s. Kasparov also used it in one of his matches with Karpov, but abandoned it following a heavy defeat. Black's ideas include ...♘fd7 and ...♘c6, with piece-pressure on the centre coming before (or instead of) any pawn-breaks. The notes to this game also touch upon 7...♘c6, which can have ideas in common with the Smyslov System, but can also branch out in totally different directions.

Although strange at first sight, the flank development of the knight by 7...♘a6 intends the rapid preparation of the freeing thrust ...c5. While named after Prins, the variation was brought under the spotlight by Kasparov's adoption of it in the late 1980s. This line is the subject of **Game 19** (Nayer-Kurnosov).

Game 17 [D97]

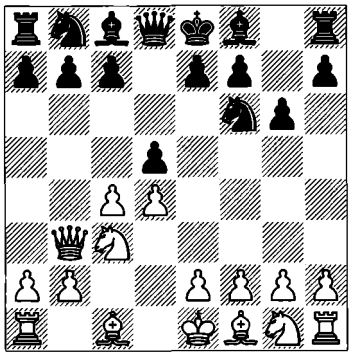
Antony Bellaiche – Emil Sutovsky

Catalan Bay 2007

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3

As already mentioned, White has the option of immediately increasing the pressure on d5 by 4 ♕b3 *(D)*.

B



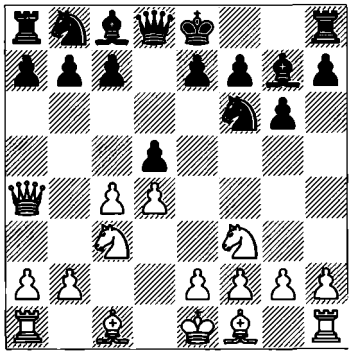
If Black chooses to react in a standard fashion, then after 4...dxc4 5 ♕xc4 ♗g7 6 e4 0-0, White, if he wishes to get something different rather than the main system, can choose to play 7 ♗e2 instead of 7 ♘f3. Now 7...♘a6 pushes White back onto the beaten track (of Game 19) all the same; if that doesn't appeal to Black, then he can play in similar fashion to the Smyslov System (compare Game 18), except that, due to the knight's absence from f3, the undermining thrust ...e5 is readily available: 7...♘fd7 8 ♗e3 ♘b6 9 ♕c5 e5. The attempt to put pressure on the white centre with the help of an immediate diversion on the queenside by 7...c6 8 ♘f3 b5 9 ♕b3 ♕a5 is also interesting.

The preliminary check 4 ♕a4+ has the point of luring the bishop out to d7, where it blocks the d-file and leaves the b7-pawn without protection: thus 4...♗d7 is met by 5 ♕b3. Besides the attempt to reach familiar positions with 5...dxc4, it is possible to take advantage of the d4-pawn's lack of protection and accept the pawn sacrifice with 5...♘c6 6 ♘f3 ♘a5 7 ♕c2 dxc4, although White obtains good compensation.

4...♗g7 5 ♕b3

With the knight developed to f3, defending the d4-pawn, there are more reasons for 5 ♕a4+ *(D)*, as this denies Black certain options.

B



In case of 5...c6 White can reach a position akin to the Exchange Variation by 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 e4.

The principal line runs 5...♗d7 6 ♕b3 dxc4 (here there is no alternative) 7 ♕xc4 0-0 8 e4. Now:

a) 8...a6 is pointless here, as the bishop is far from the b7-square.

b) On the other hand 8...b5 is possible now. Then 9 ♘xb5 ♘xe4 10 ♕xc7 (after 10 ♘xc7 ♘c6 11 ♘xa8 ♕a5+ Black's initiative is too strong) 10...♘c6 11 ♗d3 ♘b4 12 ♗xe4 ♗xb5 13 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 provides sufficient compensation for the pawn; Black has rich counterplay after 9 ♕b3 c5 as well.

c) 8...♗g4 is the Smyslov System (see Game 18), with only the move-number changed, as both sides have lost a tempo.

d) The choice of 8...♘c6 presupposes that Black is ready to play the game with a non-standard material balance after 9 e5 ♗e6 (the bishop occupies the knight's natural retreat-square, so the following operation is forced) 10 exf6 ♗xc4 11 fxg7 ♔xg7 12 ♗xc4 ♘xd4 13 ♘xd4 ♕xd4. As a rule, three minor pieces are stronger than a queen, but here Black has two extra pawns as well.

5...dxc4

After 5...c6 White can count on a small but durable advantage by playing 6 cxd5. Then the recapture 6...cxd5 transposes into the Exchange Slav, where fianchettoing the dark-squared bishop is not the best decision, while 6...♘xd5

grants White a choice of various methods of obtaining superiority in the centre.

6 ♕xc4 0-0 7 e4

The preliminary assault on c7 by 7 ♗f4 leaves Black with a choice: transpose into a sideline of the 7...♘a6 system (see note 'e' to White's 8th move in Game 19), or play 7...c6 with queenside pawn activity to follow.

7...a6 *(D)*

Here too, 7...c6 is often employed. Besides supporting the possible raid by the b-pawn, this move takes control over the d5-square, which can be significant if Black switches to undermining the centre from the other side. Here is a fresh example: 8 ♕b3 e5 9 dxe5 ♘g4 10 ♗e2 ♘xe5 11 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 12 0-0 ♕e7 13 ♗e3 ♗e6, Radjabov-Mamedyarov, Wijk aan Zee 2008.

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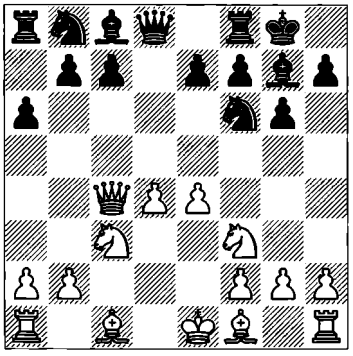

The text-move was first developed by Hungarian players about forty years ago. Black will follow up with ...b5 in almost all cases, with ...♗b7 and ...c5 also very much on the agenda.

8 ♗e2

White develops, for the moment keeping the pawn configuration in the centre intact.

But before moving on to an examination of this move, we should consider the fundamental basis for Black's little move with his a-pawn:

a) First of all, Black agrees to sacrifice a pawn, for which he will obtain sufficient compensation – 8 ♗f4 b5 9 ♕xc7 ♕xc7 10 ♗xc7 ♗b7 11 e5 ♘d5 12 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 with the subsequent ...♘c6 and ...♖fc8.

b) We should note that White cannot prevent ...b5 by 8 a4?! since then 8...b5 follows anyway, because 9 axb5?? axb5 is a catastrophe for White because of the loose rook on a1.

c) 8 ♕b3 is an important possibility. After 8...b5, 9 e5 transposes to line 'd', while 9 ♗e2 leads to the position seen in the main game. One independent continuation is 8...c5 9 dxc5. Black wins the pawn back after 9...♕a5 10 ♕b6 ♕xb6 11 cxb6 ♘bd7 or 9...♘bd7 10 c6, and in the subsequent manoeuvring struggle White seeks an advantage based on his slightly better pawn-structure.

d) The principal alternative to the approach seen in the main game is 8 e5 b5 9 ♕b3 *(D)*.

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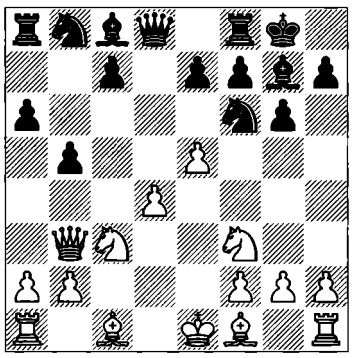

White grabs space, and will often put this to use to launch a direct attack, with the move e6 a factor in many lines.

d1) 9...♘g4?! is not so common, since after 10 h3 ♘h6 it is hard for Black to destroy the white centre. White can consolidate by 11 ♗f4 with a subsequent ♖d1 or first exchange off Black's active light-squared bishop by 11 ♗d3 ♗b7 12 ♗e4.

d2) A modification of a previously-seen idea is clearly unfavourable here: 9...♗e6? 10 exf6 ♗xb3 11 fxg7 ♔xg7 12 axb3.

d3) 9...♘fd7 is the standard move, when White has three plans:

d31) 10 h4 immediately launches a standard attack, exploiting the temporary absence of the f6-knight. In full accordance with the principle that a blow in the centre is an effective counter to flank operations, Black replies 10...c5 (10...♘b6 11 h5 c5 12 hxg6 hxg6 13 dxc5 ♗e6 14 ♕c2 ♗f5 looks reliable as well; in order to avoid a repetition, the queen has to head for a3 or e2). Now the e5-pawn is doomed and tries to sell its life for maximum profit by 11 e6 *(D)*.

Now Black must make a fundamental decision. White's centre can be reduced to rubble by 11...fxe6 12 h5 cxd4, but 13 hxg6 ♘c5 14 gxh7+ ♔h8 15 ♘h4 gives White a potent attack. It is no less dangerous if Black begins with

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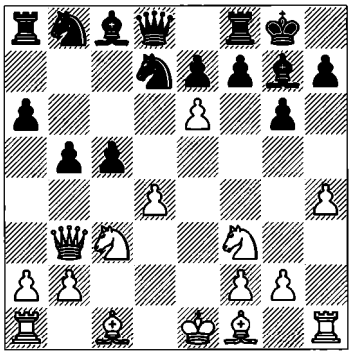

11...cxd4 12 exf7+ (the win of a piece for two pawns by 12 exd7 hands Black the initiative: 12...♘xd7 13 ♘e4 ♗b7 14 ♗d3 ♗xe4 15 ♗xe4 ♘c5 16 ♕c2?! ♖c8) 12...♔h8 13 h5. The other option is 11...c4, to neutralize White's activity with rapid development and piece control of the centre. Black not only gains a tempo but the d3-square as well, and the retreat to c2 will present in the future another tempo for the bishop on f5. After 12 ♕d1 ♘b6 (12...♘f6 blocks both the f-file and the bishop) 13 exf7+ ♖xf7 14 h5 ♘c6 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 ♗e3 ♗f5 17 ♘g5, the white king is also not safe, and there is counterplay after both the exchange sacrifice 17...♘xd4 18 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 19 ♖c1 e5 and 17...♖f6 18 g4 ♗e6 19 ♘ce4 ♗d5 20 f3 e5, Kasimdzhanov-Khalifman, Wijk aan Zee 2002.

d32) White can begin with 10 e6, while there is no threat driving the queen off b3. It is undesirable to allow the pawn to f7, so Black replies 10...fxe6. Taking on e6, even with check, will eventually prove a loss of time, so White continues his development, simultaneously hindering ...c5: 11 ♗e3 *(D)*.

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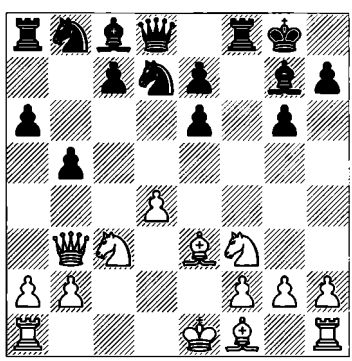

If undermining the centre doesn't work, it is time to relocate the knight from d7. It can choose 11...♘b6, when White returns to the plan of the kingside attack by 12 h4 ♘c6 13 h5. Practice has shown that the exchange sacrifice 13...♖xf3 14 gxf3 ♘xd4 15 ♖d1 is insufficient for Black, so the knight started to prefer the other direction: 11...♘f6. In reply to this it is logical to create weaknesses on the opposite flank by 12 a4, but Black returns the pawn with 12...b4 13 ♕xb4 ♘c6 and obtains counterplay along the b-file.

d33) 10 ♗e3, hindering ...c5 and leaving the e6 advance in reserve, is the most natural continuation. During the initial stage of the variation's development Black used to choose 10...♘b6, not allowing the e6 advance, yet also giving up ...c5. In that case mutual weaknesses appear, first of all Black's c5-square and the c-pawn, and the d5-square in the opposite camp; the game takes on a manoeuvring aspect, although White tends to have the lead. Then the thematic 10...c5 became the main reply, inviting the 'kamikaze' forward: 11 e6. After 11...c4 there arises a position similar to line 'd31', with the difference that the bishop is on e3 instead of White having played h4. This means that the white king's residence on the kingside is still safe, and White can initiate play on the opposite side by means of a4. Later Timman introduced 11...cxd4 into practice. Black can react to the win of a piece by 12 exd7 in two ways: 12...♕xd7 13 ♖d1 e5 14 ♗c1 ♗b7 or 12...dxe3 13 dxc8♕ exf2+ 14 ♔xf2 ♕b6+, in both cases obtaining two pawns and a strong initiative. If 12 exf7+ ♖xf7 13 ♗xd4 (13 ♘g5 is well met with 13...♘e5), then after 13...♗xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♘c5 15 ♕d5 ♕xd5 16 ♘xd5 ♘bd7 the active pieces compensate for the extra pawn-island.

8...b5 9 ♕b3 c5 *(D)*

Also possible is 9...♗b7 10 e5 ♘d5 11 0-0 c5 12 dxc5 ♘d7 13 ♘xd5 ♘xc5 14 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 15 ♕a3. Black will regain the pawn by 15...♖ac8 16 ♗f4 ♖fe8 17 ♖ac1 ♗xf3 18 ♗xf3 ♗xe5, but the bishop-pair promises White a slight initiative.

After the text-move, White has to bid farewell to the centre and prove that the passed c5-pawn is an advantage in a different form.

10 dxc5 ♗b7

If the bishop picks a different workplace by 10...♗e6, then Black wins back the c-pawn and with accurate play can hope for equality: 11

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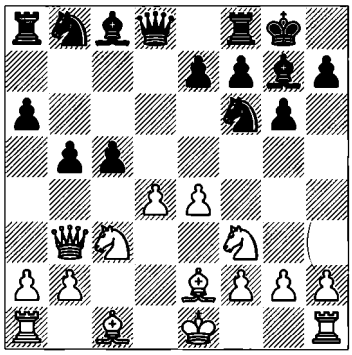

♕c2 ♘c6 12 0-0 ♕c7 13 h3 ♘b4 14 ♕b1 ♕xc5 15 ♗e3 ♕c7.

11 0-0 ♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 13 ♖d1

This move has been played a few times but is not considered to be dangerous.

In order for the passed c5-pawn to become a real factor, White needs to complete his development and rearrange his forces without dropping the b2-pawn, unless he obtains strong compensation, as the black bishops keep the queenside under dangerous fire. The development of the dark-squared bishop suggests itself, as then the queen can take up a position on e3 with gain of tempo, and the exchange on h6 can be offered. Thus:

a) After 13 ♗g5 ♘c6 14 ♕e3, one possibility for Black is 14...♗f5 15 ♗h6, when the unclear exchange sacrifice 15...♗xb2 16 ♖ad1 ♕a5 17 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 has been tested. Later another continuation was recognized as more reliable: 14...♕d5 15 ♖ad1 ♕e6 16 ♗h6 ♗c2 with a forced queen exchange.

b) Today the search for an advantage is focused on another bishop move, 13 ♗f4 *(D)*.

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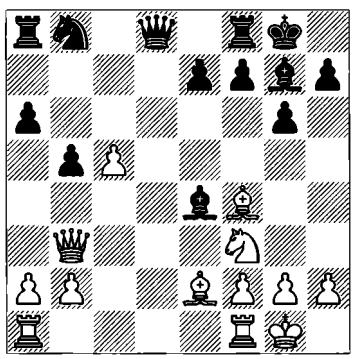

Here e7 is not under attack, and Black can inquire at once into White's plans as regards the b2-pawn by 13...♗d5. A critical line seems to be 14 ♕e3 ♗xb2 15 ♖ad1 e6 16 ♘e5. In Onishchuk-Svidler, Foros 2007, Black immediately parted with the bishop by 16...♗xe5 17 ♗xe5 ♘c6 and held out, but further developments can be expected here.

13...♕c7 14 ♗e3 ♘c6 15 ♖d2

Usually 15 a4 has been played here. Instead White defends b2 and wants to prepare the exchange of the dark-squared bishops but loosens the grip on the d4-square.

15...e6 16 ♗g5

The attempt to exchange off the other bishop brought White nothing good in Tisdall-Korchnoi, San Francisco 1995: 16 ♘g5 ♗d5 17 ♕c2 ♖ad8 18 ♗f3 ♘b4 19 ♕d1 ♗xf3 20 ♕xf3 ♘d5 21 ♖ad1 ♘xe3 22 ♕xe3 ♗xb2.

16...h6 17 ♗h4 ♗xf3 18 ♗xf3 ♘d4 19 ♕e3 *(D)*

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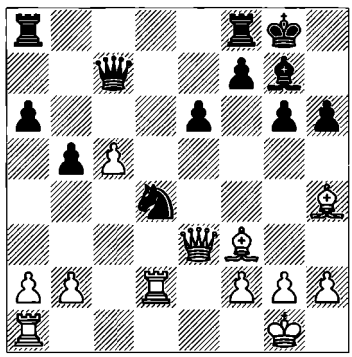

19...♘f5

Black had to choose between this move and 19...♘xf3+ 20 gxf3.

20 ♗g3 e5

In spite of the shattered pawns, White is OK in the endgame arising after 20...♕xg3 21 hxg3 ♘xe3 22 fxe3, since the strong passed pawn provides sufficient counter-chances. However, the text-move doesn't promise Black much either.

21 ♕a3 ♖ad8 22 ♖ad1 ♖xd2 23 ♖xd2 ♖d8 24 ♖d5?!

Unnecessary complications. After 24 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 25 c6 ♘xg3 26 hxg3 e4 27 ♗xe4 ♕d1+ Black has a draw for the asking, whereas attempts to play for a win are already dangerous. It seems that White, too, dreams of more.

24...♘d4 25 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 26 ♕xa6 e4 27 ♗d1 ♘f5?!

The natural 27...♕g5 gives Black a strong initiative. The decentralization of the knight returns the game to the drawing zone.

28 ♗d6?!

Simpler is 28 ♗b3 and the queen can return to the defence: 28...♕d3 29 ♕a8+ ♗f8 30 ♕d5.

28...e3 29 fxe3?!

29 ♕xb5 exf2+ 30 ♔xf2 looks more rational, and the king escapes the house arrest, when the fact that White has an entire extra flank obliges Black to be careful not to push too hard.

29...♘xe3 *(D)*

30 ♗f3?

This loses, since the bishop occupies the square to which the queen had to return. However, it is quite likely that even after 30 ♗e2 ♕h4 31 ♕a8+ ♔h7 32 g3 ♕d4 the search for salvation may turn out fruitless.

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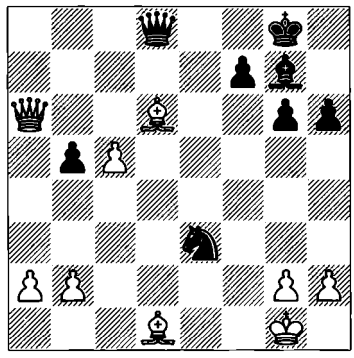

30...♕h4 31 ♗g3

Black also has a decisive attack in case of 31 g3 ♕b4 32 ♕a8+ ♔h7 33 h4 ♕e1+ 34 ♔h2 ♕f2+ 35 ♔h3 g5.

31...♕c4 32 h4 ♕c1+ 33 ♔h2 ♘f1+ 34 ♔h3 ♘xg3 35 ♔xg3 ♕e1+ 0-1

Game 18 [D99]

Vlastimil Babula – David Navara

Czech Ch, Luhačovice 2003

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♕b3 dxc4 6 ♕xc4 0-0 7 e4 ♗g4

This system bears the name of Smyslov, who laid the first bricks of its foundation. Let's examine another possibility – the natural developing move 7...♘c6 *(D)*, also frequently seen in contemporary practice.

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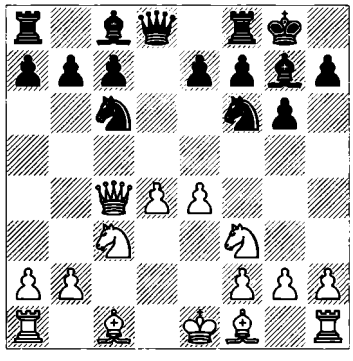

Black generally intends to reach the 'Smyslov' set-up via a different move-order, and in the meantime the g4-square remains accessible to the knight too. All reasonable replies have been tried. The knights' somewhat defiant position provokes the centre into advancing. The d4-pawn is best advised to stay put since after 8 d5 ♘a5 9 ♕d3 c6, White would be prudent to acquiesce to equality by 10 dxc6 ♘xc6 11 ♕xd8 while the option is there. Its colleague on e4 has better grounds for an advance: 8 e5. In the previous game we examined a similar position with the bishop on d7, where it was lured by the check on a4. That meant that the knight was deprived of this retreat-square, and Black was left with a choice between moving to an inferior square and the bishop move to e6 with the exchange of three minor pieces for the queen and two pawns, which is what Black usually did. 8...♗e6 is possible here as well, but 8...♘d7 is now available as an alternative, and is considered preferable. A possible course of events is 9 ♗e3 ♘b6 10 ♕c5 a5 11 ♗e2 ♘b4 12 0-0 c6, with strong and weak squares on both sides and White enjoying a bit more freedom of action.

White can rule out ...♗g4 with the prophylactic 8 h3, but Black is OK then. Black has wasted no time and played actively, which cannot be said about the expedition by his opponent's queen; the standard transfer of the knight to b6 with a subsequent ...f5 gives Black an excellent game.

The development of the dark-squared bishop by 8 ♗e3 elicits the natural reply 8...♘g4 with a further ...e5, so the preliminary 8 ♗f4 has been tried, threatening the c7-pawn and intending to drop back to e3 only after 8...♘h5, but following 9...♗g4 the knight turns out to placed rather well, eyeing the f4-square.

8 ♗e2 *(D)* is considered to be the most solid continuation.

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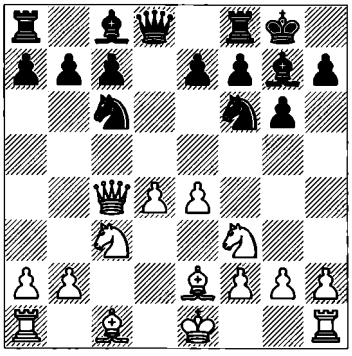

The pawn sacrifice 8...e5 9 d5 ♘d4 is inadequate: 10 ♘xd4 exd4 11 ♕xd4 c6 12 ♕c4. Black should content himself with the fact that White has committed to developing this bishop to e2, and return into the main system of development with 8...♗g4. He is agreeable to 9 ♗e3 ♗xf3 and now 10 gxf3 e5 11 d5 ♘d4 or 10 ♗xf3 e5 11 d5 ♘d4 12 ♗d1 a6 (or 12...c6). For White, the search for an advantage has focused on the line 9 d5 ♘a5 10 ♕b4 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 c6 12 0-0. Besides the traditional set-up 12...cxd5 13 exd5 ♖c8 with the transfer of the blockading knight to d6, 12...♕b6 is under development at the time of writing; e.g., 13 ♕a4 (the win of a pawn by 13 ♕xe7 grants Black active pieces and good prospects of equality after 13...♘c4 14 dxc6 bxc6 15 ♗f4 ♖fe8 16 ♕c7 ♕xc7 17 ♗xc7 ♖ac8 18 ♗g3 ♘h5) 13...♘d7 14 ♖d1 ♖fd8 15 ♕c2 ♖ac8 16 ♗e3 ♕b4 17 dxc6 bxc6 18 ♗e2 ♘c4 with mutual chances, Onishchuk-Avrukh, Biel 2007.

We now return to 7...♗g4 *(D)*:

8 ♗e3

This is considered to be the most unpleasant continuation – White strengthens the centre and clears the way for the rook. Other moves:

a) 8 ♘e5 suggests itself but has its drawbacks; after 8...♗e6 9 d5 ♗c8 the changes in the position consist of the advance of the pawn

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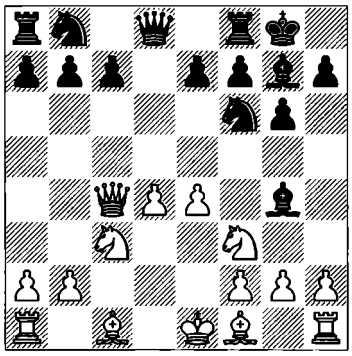

and the knight. However, the pawn is easier to undermine on d5, and the unprotected steed requires a close watch; after 10 ♗e2 e6 11 0-0 exd5 12 exd5 ♘e8 the transfer of the knight to d6 gives Black a pleasant game.

b) Less tense for Black is 8 ♗e2 ♘fd7 9 ♗e3 ♘b6, when the d4-pawn's lack of protection deprives the white queen of the retreat to b3. After 10 ♕d3 ♘c6 11 ♖d1 Black has a choice: 11...♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 e5, 11...♕d7 or 11...♕c8; for example, 11...♕c8 12 ♕c2 ♖d8 13 d5 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♘e5 15 ♗e2 c6 16 ♕b3 ♘g4, Ki.Georgiev-Kamsky, World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2007. 10 ♕c5 also presents Black with a tempo, and 10...♘8d7 gives him good chances.

8...♘fd7

This move looks strange, as Black spends time decentralizing an already-developed piece, but precisely this move is the main idea that the system is based upon. The functionality of the pieces is more important than good looks, and the b6-square is preferable to f6 due to the concrete specifics of the position. The idea is to cause White problems by attacking the d4-pawn (this theme started with the move ...♗g4), and the knight's manoeuvre unmasks the g7-bishop and prepares to attack the white queen, which is one of the d4-pawn's defenders. At an appropriate moment in the near future, Black will play ...♘c6, whereupon White will need to make some sort of concession to hold his centre.

For a long time the move-order 8...♘c6?! has been regarded as dubious: 9 d5 ♗xf3 10 gxf3 (10 dxc6 b5!) 10...♘e5 11 ♕e2 with f4, ♗g2 and 0-0 to follow, Botvinnik-Smyslov, Groningen 1946.

9 ♕b3

By retreating to b3 at once, White encourages the enemy knight not to get distracted from the b6-square. Naturally, there are several other possibilities.

Considering that in the coming struggle the white king often remains in the centre, 9 0-0-0 *(D)* suggests itself, sending it to the queenside with no loss of time compared to playing ♖d1.

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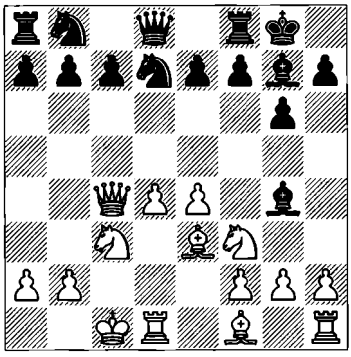

But here too, it is insufficiently secure, as the g7-bishop exerts a strong influence on this side of the board, and the rooks have better chances of opening lines. Black has several promising plans: the pawn advance ...c6 (or ...a6) and ...b5, or the attempt to clear the diagonal with ...e5 or ...c5; for example, 9...c5 10 dxc5 ♕a5 11 ♔b1 ♘c6 12 ♗e2 b5 13 cxb6 ♗e6 with a fun game, Piket-Shirov, Amber Rapid, Monaco 1996. For his part, White, having a certain superiority in the centre, strives to simplify the position and obtain an advantage in the endgame.

The main alternative to the move in the game is 9 ♖d1. Often this comes down to a mere transposition of moves, but independent lines appear after 9...♘c6, intending a different use for the d7-knight:

a) 10 ♕b3 e5 11 dxe5 ♘cxe5 12 ♗e2 ♗e6. If White takes the b7-pawn, Black acquires an active rook on b2, while 13 ♕c2 ♘xf3+ and 14...c6 is also OK for Black.

b) There are more branches in case of 10 ♗e2:

b1) The line 10...♘b6 11 ♕c5 *(D)* has a high pedigree.

Let's recall a celebrated encounter: 11...♕d6 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 gxf3 ♖fd8 14 d5 ♘e5 15 ♘b5 ♕f6 16 f4 ♘ed7 17 e5 ♕xf4! was played in Botvinnik-Fischer, Varna Olympiad 1962, where

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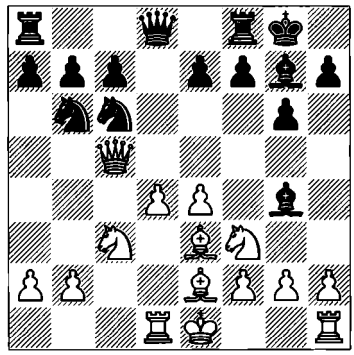

the events in the opening turned out to be a mere *hors d'oeuvre*, and the subsequent endgame was analysed for decades. We should also mention the 1986 match between Karpov and Kasparov, where the move 12 e5 was twice the subject of discussion. Today Black has no fear of this position.

b2) The voluntary capture 10...♗xf3 is occasionally seen. If White recaptures with 11 ♗xf3, then 11...e5 looks good, while in case of 11 gxf3 ♘b6 12 ♕c5 the attempt to undermine the centre with the other pawn, i.e. 12...f5, has been tested in recent practice. As an example, I would like to offer the reader the following miniature: 13 h4 f4 14 d5 ♘e5 15 ♗d4 ♕d7?! 16 ♘b5 ♖fc8 17 ♕c3 ♘a4? 18 ♕b3 (it transpires that White has another threat as well: ♘xc7) 1-0 Landa-Van der Weide, Hamburg 2007.

9...♘b6

White's last move loosened his control over c5 and failed to bring a rook to the d-file. Black can try to take advantage of these facts with 9...c5 *(D)*.

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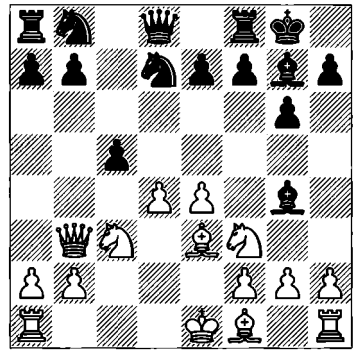

White is offered two pawns to choose from, but he usually declines, as 10 dxc5 ♕a5 or 10

♕xb7 ♗xf3 11 gxf3 cxd4 is quite fine for Black. There remains 10 d5, with 10...♘a6 as the reply. Initially, White sought to refute the variation by exploiting the exposed position of the g4-bishop after 11 ♘d2, but Black's counterplay after 11...e6 is considered adequate: 12 d6 (Black feels confident in sharp continuations like 12 ♗c4 exd5 13 ♗xd5 ♘b4 or 12 h3 exd5 13 exd5 ♗f5 14 g4 c4) 12...♗d4 13 ♘b5 e5 14 h3 ♗e6 15 ♗c4 ♗xc4 16 ♘xc4 ♕h4 with mutual chances, Lugovoi-Klimov, St Petersburg Ch 2004. Nowadays 11 ♗e2 is preferred, with positions close to those examined in the next game; the difference is that it is harder for Black to include the exchange of the e-pawns on d5, so he seeks counterplay after 11...♖b8 or 11...♕b6.

10 ♖d1 e6

It appears that 10...♘c6?!, which for a long time was the main move, is suffering from a serious illness. Events usually develop as follows: 11 d5 ♘e5 12 ♗e2 ♘xf3+ 13 gxf3 ♗h5 *(D)*.

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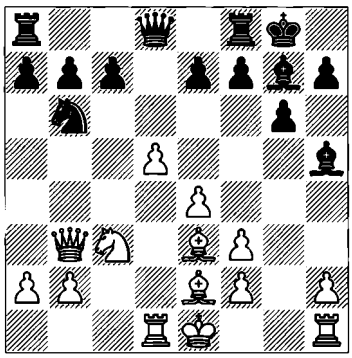

The post on h3 often turns out to be a deathtrap after f4-f5, but on h5 Black has to be alert as well. 14 f4 used to be popular, playing for an attack, but it leads to rather double-edged positions. Today White favours 14 ♖g1 ♕d7 (or 14...♕c8) 15 ♖g3 c6 16 a4 ♕c7, combining play in the centre with threats on the kingside and against the h5-bishop.

In order to reduce the effect of the d5 advance, it is sensible to play ...e6, although this presents White with a tempo for development. Black must decide whether to include the exchange on f3. If he is going to do so, now is the time, while White has no choice about how to recapture: 10...♗xf3 11 gxf3 e6. White can play in the centre or against the king. In the first case he aims for an advantage in the endgame, not hesitating to sacrifice a pawn: 12 d5 exd5 13 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♖xd5 ♕f6 15 f4 ♕xb2 16 ♕xb2 ♗xb2 17 ♖b5 ♗c3+ 18 ♔e2 b6 19 e5 ♘a6 20 ♗g2 ♖ab8 21 ♖c1 ♗b4 22 ♖c6, Beliavsky-Krasenkow, Barcelona 2007. The prospects of the attack are attractive as well: 12 h4 ♘c6 13 e5 h5 14 ♗g2 ♘e7 15 ♗g5 ♕d7 16 f4 c6 17 ♘e4 ♕c7 18 ♗f3 ♘bd5 19 ♖d2, freeing the square for the queen in order to prepare the sacrifice on h5, M.Gurevich-Krasenkow, Jakarta 1996.

11 ♗e2 ♘c6 *(D)*

Here 11...♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♘c6 13 e5 looks even more suspect, as White doesn't have to pay for the powerful light-squared bishop with the weakening of his pawn-structure.

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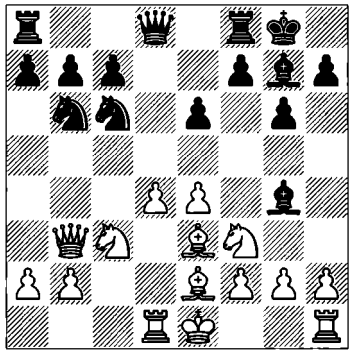

12 ♘g1

This is playable thanks to the tempo spent on ...e6. Not being forced to advance, White keeps the mobility of the centre intact. A step forward by each pawn has been tested as well: 12 d5 simplifies the position and so reduces Black's problems, so 12 e5 has been played more frequently. Naturally, this weakens the d5-square, but we can also list the pros: the dark squares are fixed, and the g7-bishop becomes passive, while the knight acquires the e4-square and a path to c5. A manoeuvring struggle with chances for both sides lies ahead.

12...♗xe2 13 ♘gxe2 ♕e7

The exchange that took place has a positive aspect for Black as well – besides the fact that there are now fewer pieces on the board, White's control over the c4-square has been weakened, and Black can hope to sink a knight into it.

14 a3

The queen is contemplating a walk to b4, but at the moment White is not obliged to prevent it. After 14 0-0, 14...♕b4?! is dubious in view of 15 ♕xb4 ♘xb4 16 d5 threatening ♗c5, so the usual reply is 14...♖fd8, which we shall illustrate with the following game: 15 e5 h6 (without a knight on e4 it is hard for White to create threats, and with his reply Black forestalled a possible ♗g5) 16 ♘e4 ♕b4 17 ♕c2 ♕c4 18 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 19 ♖c1 ♘xb2 20 ♖b1 ♘c4 21 ♖xb7 with the initiative in the endgame, Beliavsky-Ftačnik, Turin Olympiad 2006.

14...♘a5 15 ♕b5 ♘ac4 16 ♗g5 ♕e8 17 ♕b3

After the exchange of the queens, no advantage is apparent either.

17...e5

There have been other plans of counterplay as well, such as 17...a5, intending to fix the light squares. Black chooses not to include a preliminary 17...h6, hoping instead to take advantage of the drawbacks of the bishop's position on g5.

18 d5

The complications after 18 ♘b5 exd4 or 18 ♘d5 ♘a5 are OK for Black.

18...f5 *(D)*

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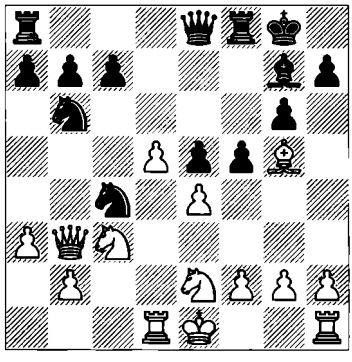

19 0-0

The exchange 19 exf5 gxf5 gives Black a mobile pawn-pair and additional active possibilities.

19...f4 20 f3 ♖f7 21 ♖d3 ♗f8

After a relatively quiet manoeuvring opening, the game enters a dynamic phase. The subsequent play resembles sharp lines of the King's Indian Defence. The difference is that the centre is not closed here, which makes it possible for Black to activate his 'bad' bishop, while White obliges his opponent to take into consideration the already-exposed weakness on c7.

22 ♖c1 ♗c5+ 23 ♔h1 ♗e3 24 ♖c2 h6

White needs just one more move to encircle Black's active pieces. A game of calculation begins, with the motto "whoever is first, wins!"

25 ♗h4 g5 26 ♗e1 g4 27 ♘d1?!

27 fxg4!? looks risky because 27...f3?! gives Black an extremely strong attack in lines like 28 gxf3? ♖xf3 29 ♔g2 ♕f7 30 ♘d1 ♖f1 31 ♗g3 ♕f3+ 32 ♔h3 ♖xd1 33 ♖xd1 h5 34 gxh5 ♔f7 35 ♘g1 ♕xh5+ 36 ♔g2 ♕xd1 37 ♖f2+ ♗xf2 38 ♕xd1 ♘e3+. However, 28 ♘g3! is much better, because after 28...f2 29 ♗xf2 ♖xf2 30 ♖xf2 ♗xf2 31 ♘f5 it is now White who has a powerful attack.

27...gxf3 28 gxf3 ♖g7 *(D)*

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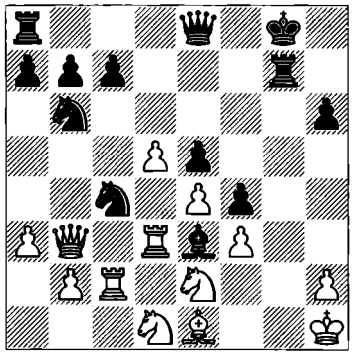

29 ♘xe3

There was a mating threat in the form of ...♕h5, so the exchange sacrifice is forced. Nevertheless, White obtains compensation in the form of a pawn and Black's weaknesses on c7, e5 and h6, and this is sufficient to maintain the balance.

29...♘xe3 30 ♖xe3 fxe3 31 ♘g3 ♔h7 32 ♘f5 ♕h5 33 ♕xe3 ♘xd5

Black decides to return the exchange, hoping to get an attack with material being even. The other method, 33...♖f7 34 ♗d2 ♖xf5 35 exf5 ♘xd5 36 ♕e4 c6 37 ♕g4, doesn't promise much either.

34 ♕d3?

A mistake, and one that is immediately fatal. 34 ♕f2 ♖g5 35 ♘g3 ♖xg3 36 ♕xg3 ♖g8 37 ♕f2 ♘f4 38 ♖xc7+ ♔h8 39 ♕f1 ♖g2 40 h4 holds the game.

34...♘f4 35 ♘xg7 ♕h3 0-1

Game 19 [D97]

Evgeny Nayer – Igor Kurnosov

Russian Ch, Krasnoiarsk 2007

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘f3 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 d5 5 ♕b3 dxc4 6 ♕xc4 0-0 7 e4 ♘a6 *(D)*

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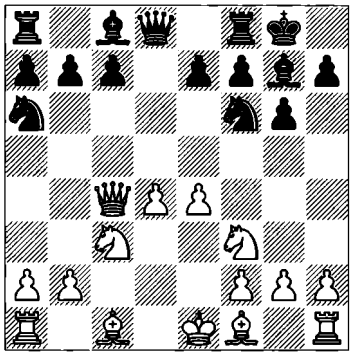

Taking advantage of the fact that the queen obstructs the bishop's path to a6, Black brings out the knight to this square. Development to the edge of the board is condemned by most beginners' manuals, but there are no rules without exceptions, and as time passed, the value of a move began to measured as the sum of the accompanying virtues and drawbacks. In this case the knight supports the most effective attack upon White's centre, i.e. ...c5, without getting in the way of the other pieces at the same time.

8 ♗e2

The most natural and popular continuation, though not the only one, of course. Let's examine the other possibilities:

a) 8 ♕b3 clears the diagonal for the bishop, creating ♗xa6 ideas. However, Black has time to strike in the centre by 8...c5. Besides 9 d5 no good reply is apparent, and then Black needs to make a decision. He is not too worried about the spoiling of his pawn-structure, as White is not well enough developed to fix these weaknesses, while two good bishops and the b-file provide sufficient counterplay. To forestall a possible advance in the centre, he carries out the thematic 9...e6, when a possible continuation is 10 ♗xa6 bxa6 11 0-0 exd5 12 exd5 and now 12...♗f5 or 12...♕b6.

b) 8 ♕a4 puts the queen on a different square but has similar ideas. The assessment doesn't change substantially, but there are certain differences after 8...c5 9 d5. First, there is 9...♗d7, but the exchange of the bishops with 10 ♗b5 is more likely to favour White, as the undermining thrust ...e6 is deprived of support. Second, after 9...e6 10 ♗xa6 bxa6 there are more reasons to choose the 11 dxe6 ♗xe6 (not attacking the queen) set-up, agreeing to switch to defence for the time being.

White can begin with the development of the dark-squared bishop:

c) 8 ♗e3 is rarely seen as it fails to hinder 8...c5. After 9 dxc5 ♘g4 10 ♗d2 ♗e6 11 ♕b5 ♗d7 12 ♕xb7 ♘xc5 13 ♕b4 ♕b6 Black's activity compensates for the lost pawn.

d) By choosing 8 ♗g5 c5 9 d5 White intends to make use of the pin after 9...e6 10 0-0-0; for example, 10...♕a5 11 ♕b5 ♕xb5 12 ♗xb5 ♘c7 13 ♗e2 exd5 14 exd5 ♖d8 15 d6 ♘ce8 16 ♗b5, Azmaiparashvili-Carlsen, World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005. However, Black can play better: 9...h6 (the bishop must be removed from the diagonal) 10 ♗h4 b5 11 ♘xb5 ♕a5+ 12 ♘d2 ♖b8 with a dangerous initiative for the pawn.

e) The main rival to the text-move is 8 ♗f4 (this position is frequently reached via 7 ♗f4 ♘a6 8 e4). As always, Black counters with 8...c5 *(D)*. Then:

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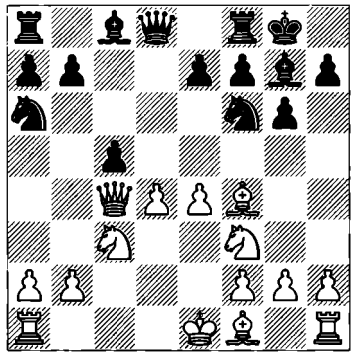

e1) The long search for an advantage after 9 dxc5 failed to bring White success. In reply, Black has two options:

e11) 9...♕a5 is met by 10 e5, seeking to disturb the harmonious arrangement of Black's forces. 10...♘d7 11 a3 (forcing Black to capture the pawn with his queen, but also weakening his light squares) 11...♕xc5. Initially 12 ♘d5 was tested, until it transpired that the pawn sacrifice 12...♘b6 13 ♕xc5 ♘xc5 14 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 gives Black good counterplay. White then switched to 12 ♕e4, but has yet to achieve consistent success. For example, Black can offer an exchange of queens by 12...♕c6.

e12) The pawn sacrifice 9...♗e6 10 ♕b5 ♗d7 is no less tempting. After 11 ♕xb7 ♘xc5 12 ♕b4 ♘e6 13 ♗e5 a5 14 ♕a3 ♕b6, 15 ♗c4 can be met with 15...♖fc8, as played by Kasparov, while 15...♘g4, as advocated by Sutovsky, is also interesting.

e2) White can of course push forward: 9 d5 e6. Then 10 d6 is of independent significance. We shall illustrate the possible course of events with an example from the work of highly esteemed players: 10...e5 (10...♘b4 and 10...♘h5 have also occurred) 11 ♗xe5 ♘b4 12 ♖d1 ♗e6 13 ♕xc5 ♘c2+ 14 ♔d2 ♘d7 15 ♕c7 ♘xe5 16 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 17 ♔xc2 ♘g4 18 ♖d2 ♗h6 19 ♖e2 ♖xd6 with compensation for the pawn, Piket-Kasparov, Wijk aan Zee 2000.

f) White can also advance immediately in the centre: 8 e5 ♘d7. The pattern of play resembles the variation from Game 17, except that there is a knight instead of a pawn on a6. It seems that this change does not hurt Black's chances; in lines like 9 e6 ♘b6 10 exf7+ ♔h8 his king is not the safest, on the other hand his pieces are active.

8...c5 9 d5 e6 10 0-0 exd5 11 exd5 *(D)*

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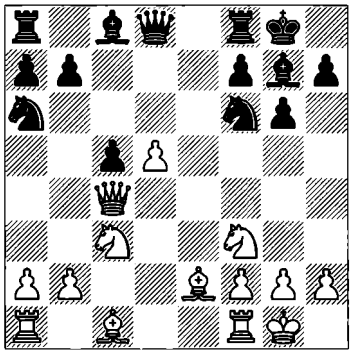

We have reached the main-line position of the 7...♘a6 system. The sole remnant of White's pawn-centre is on d5. This pawn possesses all the virtues of both a centre pawn and a passed pawn. On the other hand, it lacks the support of its colleagues, which gives it the increased vulnerability typical of an isolated pawn.

11...♗f5

This is the most natural place for the bishop. Other moves:

a) 11...b5 is a radical attempt to liquidate the bone of contention immediately. After 12 ♘xb5 ♕xd5 13 ♗f4 or 12 ♕xb5 ♘xd5 13 ♗g5 the weakness of the queenside pawns condemns Black to defence, and so White keeps a modest advantage.

b) 11...b6 *(D)* plans to develop the bishop along its other diagonal, with the hope of coming out at a6. Then:

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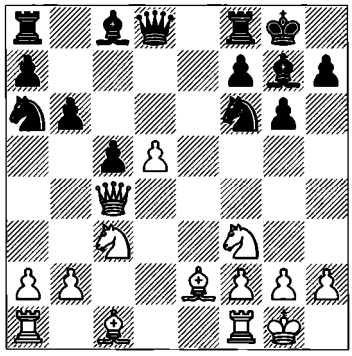

b1) 12 ♖d1 is met by 12...♘b4, when after 13 ♕h4?! ♘c2 14 ♖b1 ♗f5 15 ♗g5 ♘d4 16 ♖bc1 h6 17 ♗xh6 ♘xd5 18 ♗g5 ♘xc3 19 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 it is White who has to think about equalizing. Today the search for advantage starts after 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♖d2 or the prophylactic retreat 13 ♕b3 ♗f5 14 ♘e1.

b2) 12 ♕h4 has the idea of not wasting time on the d5-pawn's defence and switching at once to the attack on the kingside, using a pin on the d-file and a temporary weakening of the long h1-a8 diagonal as additional tactical trumps. Now 12...♘c7 is the most prudent course. Instead 12...♘xd5 may be somewhat rash, although an attempt to refute the pawn capture immediately doesn't come off: 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 14 ♘g5 h6 15 ♗f3 hxg5 16 ♗xg5 ♕d4 17 ♗xa8 ♕xh4 18 ♗xh4 ♗e6 19 ♗e4 ♗xb2 with sufficient compensation. The critical line runs 13 ♗g5 ♕d6, when after 14 ♖ad1 ♘ac7 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♗c4 ♗b7 17 ♖d2 f6 18 ♖fd1 fxg5 19

♘xg5 ♖f5 20 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 Black not only survived but in the subsequent struggle even managed to win in the game Volkov-Sutovsky, Moscow 2005. 14 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 15 ♖ad1, (Frei-Siefring, correspondence game 2001) is probably stronger.

c) Another popular move is 11...♖e8 *(D)*, primarily with a view to the struggle for the e4-square.

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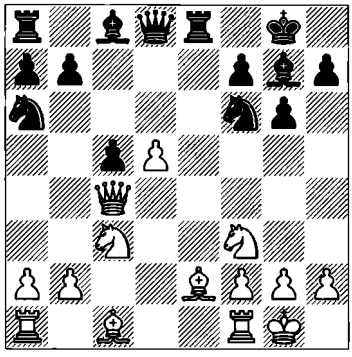

Placing a rook on d1 is an obvious solution to the problem of supporting the passed pawn, and if the queen's rook is to be entrusted with this task, it is time to bring out the bishop.

c1) 12 ♗f4 doesn't look bad, as the bishop controls a portion of its protégé's itinerary, and 12...♗f5 can be met by 13 ♖ad1. If the thematic 13...♘e4 is countered with the obvious 14 ♗d3, Black can equalize by force: 14...♗xc3 15 bxc3 b5 16 ♕xb5 ♘xc3 17 ♕xa6 ♗xd3 18 ♕xd3 ♘e2+ 19 ♔h1 ♘xf4. Complex play ensues after 14 ♘b5, with Black having his share of trumps.

c2) 12 ♗e3 develops the bishop in more modest fashion. Here it is more secure, attacks a pawn and blocks the e-file. After 12...♗f5 13 ♖ad1 *(D)* two continuations are employed:

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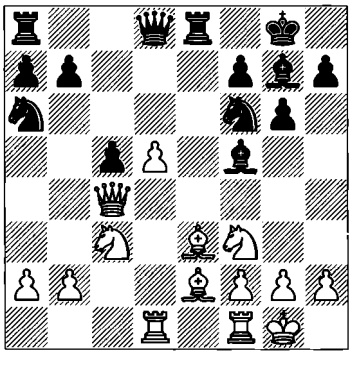

c21) The first is 13...♘e4 14 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 15 ♕c1, with two threats – a capture on a6, then on c5, and ♗d3. After 15...♕b6 16 ♗d3 the complications favour White, while in regard to 15...♕f6 we shall mention the game Ehlvest-Kriventsov, National Open, Las Vegas 2004: 16 ♗d3 ♖b4 17 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 18 b3 ♖d8, and by sacrificing a pawn with 19 ♘d2 ♖xd5 20 ♘c4, White shut the b4-rook out of the game.

c22) Black's other continuation is 13...♕b6, when 14 b3 looks logical. The discussion initially centred on the exchange sacrifice 14...♖xe3 (usually only a temporary one); then with Kasparov's blessing 14...♖ad8 became the principal move, which is what the chief expert of today's chess chose: 15 ♘a4 ♕d6 16 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 17 ♗xc5 ♕d7 18 ♗d4 a6 19 ♗d3 b5 20 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 21 ♕c6 ♘xd5 22 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 with equality, *The Baron-Rybka*, Leiden 2007.

c3) There is no unequivocal answer to the question of which rook should stand on d1, so many prefer to employ the other rook immediately: 12 ♖d1. If in response to 12...♗f5 White develops the bishop to e3 or f4, then in comparison with the positions examined above the only difference is that a different rook is placed on d1, which has no significant importance in the resulting variations. Therefore we shall examine 13 d6 instead – the rook went to d1 to support the pawn's advance, so the pawn advances. Here 13...♘e4? is bad due to 14 d7 ♖e7 15 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 16 ♗g5 ♗f6 17 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 18 ♕c3, when the passed pawn will cost Black dearly. Aside from its career ambitions, the pawn opened the diagonal to the f7-pawn for the queen. If Black allows ♘g5, he has a defence, of course, but it is rather uncomfortable, so prophylactic 13...h6 is preferred. The subsequent plan is to commence play on the queenside, where Black has an extra pawn: 14 ♗f4 ♘d7 15 ♖d2 ♘b4 16 ♕b3 ♘b6.

12 ♖d1

Here too, the main alternatives are those same moves by the dark-squared bishop. We shall start with 12 ♗e3. The reply 12...♖e8 has already been considered (line 'c2' of the previous note); another idea is 12...♕b6 *(D)*.

On this square the queen is eyed by the e3-bishop, which gives rise to the idea of preparing b4, introduced by 13 ♘h4 ♗d7. The knight is

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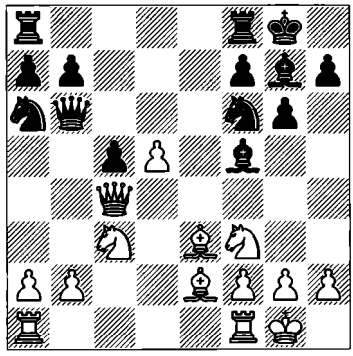

poorly placed on h4, but driving the bishop back makes the b1-square accessible, which in turn neutralizes the threat of the capture on b2. Likewise, the black bishop has retreated from its active post, but d7 is a useful workplace, from where it supports a possible advance of the queenside pawns. The fact that the enemy queen hampers such an advance provides some consolation to White, and he can set up his threat with 14 a3 or 14 ♖ab1. However, it transpires that 14...♖fe8 parries b4, since the exchange sacrifice on e3 with the subsequent capture on b4 allows Black to develop a serious initiative: 14 ♖ab1 ♖fe8 15 b4 ♖xe3 16 fxe3 cxb4 17 ♕f4 ♕c5 18 ♘e4 ♘xe4 19 ♕xe4 ♖e8 20 ♕f4 ♕xe3+ 21 ♕xe3 ♖xe3 22 ♗xa6 bxa6 23 ♖xb4 ♖d3 with more than sufficient compensation, Timman-Kasparov, Sarajevo 1999. Naturally, there are more solid continuations, first of all 13 b3 ♖fe8 14 ♖ad1 with complex play and chances for both sides.

If the bishop comes out a square farther by 12 ♗f4, we are left with that same 12...♕b6 to examine, when 13 ♗e5 has original content. By defending b2 indirectly, White neutralizes the mighty bishop on g7 and is ready to build up his pressure in the centre. Accurate defence is required of Black.

12...♕b6 *(D)*

13 ♘h4

Taking advantage of the fact that the queen has temporarily blocked the way for the b-pawn, White decides to drive away the bishop, an idea that we have already seen.

13 ♕h4 or 13 d6 is more common, but in neither case have White's results been anything to boast about. For example, after 13 d6 ♖ad8 14 ♘b5 (or 14 ♘a4 ♕c6 15 ♗e3 ♘e4 16 ♕b5 ♗d7, Anand-Kasparov, Frankfurt (rapid) 1999)

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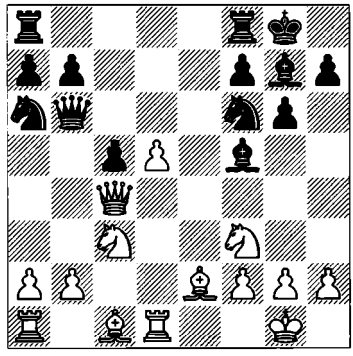

14...♖fe8 15 ♘g5 ♖d7 the raid is over, and now all the pieces will have to go back, Lugovoi-Areshchenko, Chigorin memorial, St Petersburg 2002.

13...♗d7 14 h3

White combines completing his development with restraining the black pieces. Before placing the bishop to f4, it is useful to deprive the black knight of the g4-square. However, such unhurried play doesn't pose Black any serious problems.

14...♖ad8 15 ♗f4 ♖fe8 16 ♖d2 ♕a5 *(D)*

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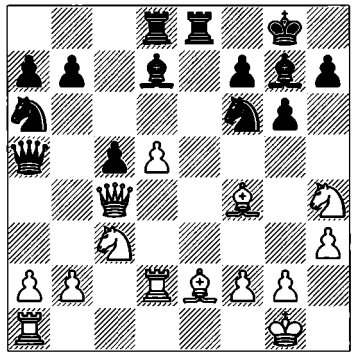

Black is fully mobilized and about to produce his arguments, first of all the pawn advantage on the queenside.

17 ♗g5

This is more a defensive, rather than an attacking, manoeuvre. Black was threatening to play ...b5, and the bishop move vacates a decent square on f4. However, this move commits White to surrendering his bishop for a knight.

17...h6 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♘f3 b5 20 ♕f4 ♗xc3

Objectively, this decision is quite correct, but it maximizes the asymmetry of the position and rocks the boat considerably. 20...♗g7 is

much more reliable, and grants Black excellent prospects.

21 bxc3 ♕xc3 22 ♖ad1 c4?! *(D)*

After 22...♔g7 23 a4 ♕b4 24 ♕xb4 ♘xb4 25 axb5 Black has the more pleasant position, but there are obvious drawish tendencies.

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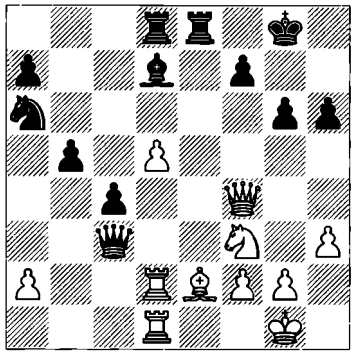

While keeping the full extent of his queenside achievements intact, the text-move gives White an opportunity to activate the knight, after which White's resources – the strong passed pawn and the insecure black king – begin to acquire real dimensions.

23 ♘d4 ♕a3?

And this is a definite mistake. It is necessary to bolster the control over the e6-square by 23...♘c5 24 ♕xh6 ♘e4 25 ♖c2 ♕a3, when Black is not worse, at any rate.

24 ♘e6 *(D)*

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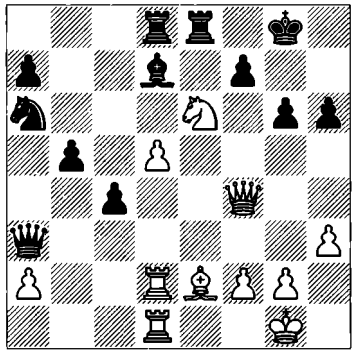

It looks like Black didn't calculate to the end the complications started by this move.

24...fxe6

24...♖b8 fails to help. After 25 ♕f6 ♗xe6 26 dxe6 ♖xe6 27 ♖d8+ ♖e8 28 ♖1d7 ♕f8 Black is holding on, but in the line 25 ♕xh6 ♗xe6 26 dxe6 ♖xe6 27 ♗g4 ♖ee8 28 ♖d6 White's threats cannot all be parried.

25 dxe6 ♕f8 26 ♕g4 ♗xe6

26...♖xe6 is probably more resilient. Now in the ending after 27 ♕xe6+ ♗xe6 28 ♖xd8 the presence of the pawn on g6 surely doesn't hurt Black any, but he is not likely to hold out after 27 ♖xd7 ♖de8 28 ♗f3.

27 ♕xg6+ ♕g7 28 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 29 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 30 ♖xd8 *(D)*

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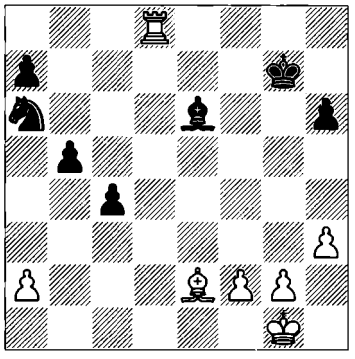


And so, the complications have resulted in an extra exchange in the endgame. The enemy passed pawn demands from White a certain degree of accuracy.

30...♘b4

It was more practical to fish for salvation chances in lines like 30...c3 31 ♖d1 ♘b4 32 ♗xb5 c2 33 ♖c1 ♗xa2 34 ♗a4 ♗b1 35 ♔f1 ♘d3 36 ♗xc2 ♘xc1 37 ♗xb1. The bishop ending that now appears is absolutely hopeless.

31 a3 c3 32 axb4 c2 33 ♖d1 cxd1♕+ 34 ♗xd1 ♔f6 35 f4 ♗c4 36 ♔f2 a5 37 bxa5 b4 38 ♔e3 b3 39 ♔d4 b2 40 ♗c2 ♗f1 41 g3 ♗xh3 1-0

At the close of this chapter let's recapitulate. In the system with ♕b3 Black obtains sufficient counterchances; this applies in particular to the continuations 7...a6 and 7...♘a6. White rarely manages to struggle for victory under the comfortable and safe conditions of a small yet solid advantage. More often than not he has to go for a sharp game of calculation, in which both players can reasonably hope to obtain winning chances.

7 Lines with ♗f4 or ♗g5

As we have seen, the principal methods for White to build a pawn-centre involve a significant degree of strategic risk: either a delay in development or the queen's early entrance into the centre. This is not to everyone's taste, and in this chapter and the next we examine another approach: White postpones the determination of the pawn configuration and first of all solves the question of piece placement. Naturally, the number of reasonable set-ups is fairly large, but e3 is the move common to all of them. We shall divide our coverage of the material into two chapters. The present chapter will focus on lines where the queen's bishop is brought out to f4 or g5 at an early stage, while in Chapter 8 it stays in place for the time being.

Before moving on to specifics of the move ♗f4 and ♗g5, it is worth noting one detail typical of the games in this chapter: the move e3 cuts off the bishop's retreat to its own camp, and Black's counterplay frequently exploits the weakening of the e1-a5 diagonal.

At first glance the post on g5 is the more aggressive of the two, as it creates an indirect attack on the d5-pawn, and, as we already noted, any means of defending this pawn involves positional concessions. However, Black has the counterattacking manoeuvre ...♘e4, which is the usual reply to ♗g5. The variations where the bishop is brought out at once – 4 ♗g5 – are examined in **Game 20** (Nakamura-Fluvia). If the preliminary 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 is included and only now 5 ♗g5, then that is the topic of **Game 21** (Kuzubov-Elianov).

The development to f4 looks less concrete. It is true that once the d4-pawn is adequately defended, a real threat will appear, viz. a capture on c7 after taking twice on d5. However, Black usually agrees quite readily to make this a sacrifice, for which he obtains sufficient compensation. There are several ways for White to combine the move ♗f4 with slightly differing development of the other white pieces, and it is important to be familiar with the subtle but often important differences between them. **Game 22** (Nakamura-Kudrin) examines the move-order 4 ♗f4 ♗g7 5 e3, whereas the features unique to 5 ♘f3 and 5 ♖c1 are expounded in **Game 23** (Lechtynsky-Stocek).

Game 20 [D80]

Hikaru Nakamura – Jordi Fluvia Poyatos

Barcelona 2007

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♗g5 *(D)*

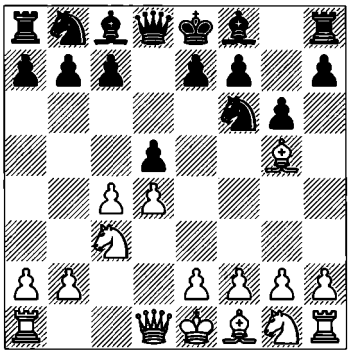
Attacking the d5-pawn at once.

4...♘e4

This is the main reaction to the bishop's appearance on g5, and a typical idea in many other cases where a bishop attacks a knight in the opening.

The gambit 4...♗g7 5 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 is occasionally seen. Now there is no point in the capture with the knight: after 6 ♘xd5 ♗g7 the number of attacks on d4 will always exceed the

B



number of defences, and Black will win the pawn back with a good game. Hence 6 cxd5, when the usual reply is 6...c6. If White accepts the sacrifice at once by 7 dxc6 ♗xd4 8 cxb7 ♗xb7, then Black has decent compensation. The indirect defence 7 ♖c1 is more crafty, but only aspires to a modest plus, as the pawn can be recovered in two ways: either 7...0-0 8 dxc6 ♗xd4 9 c7 ♗xc3+ 10 ♖xc3 ♕xd1+ 11 ♔xd1 ♘c6, followed by a methodical rounding-up of the c7-pawn and a slightly inferior ending; or 7...♕b6 8 e3 ♕xb2 9 ♗c4, when White retains his superiority in the centre.

5 ♗h4

The first question that springs to mind is why not take the knight with 5 ♘xe4? This capture occurs occasionally, mainly with a view to creating a fresher position, rather than seeking an objective advantage. White plans to exchange off the e4-pawn and so obtain a more central pawn-mass and meet the freeing ...c5 with the d5 advance. However, in the meantime his dark-squared bishop is placed offside, unlike the master of the long diagonal on g7. A kingside pawn advance implies castling queenside, which is a double-edged idea at best.

5 cxd5 can be dismissed as trickery. Black can switch to play typical of the system examined in the main game with 5...♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♕xd5, but more interesting is 5...♘xg5 6 h4 ♘e4 7 ♘xe4 ♕xd5 8 ♘c3 ♕a5, when White still has to find a way to demonstrate the benefit of the pawn's position on h4.

Let's consider the bishop's other natural retreat, 5 ♗f4 *(D)*.

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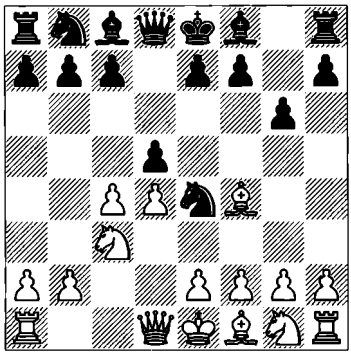

Whereas from h4 the bishop indirectly hinders the advance of the e-pawn with a pin, here it controls another diagonal, takes direct control of the e5-square and supports operations on the c-file. Following 5...♘xc3 6 bxc3, 6...dxc4 is not as attractive any more, since 7 ♕a4+ and 8 ♕xc4 places the c7-pawn under attack. On the other hand, the exchange of queens is fine for Black in the line 6...♗g7 7 ♘f3 c5 8 e3 0-0 9 cxd5 cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕xd5 11 ♗e2 and now 11...♕a5+ 12 ♕d2 ♘c6 or 11...♘c6 12 0-0 ♗f5 13 ♕a4 ♕a5. Then a minor-piece ending is in prospect, with White enjoying a minimal advantage thanks to his slight superiority in the centre, but Black has every reasons to expect to level the game.

5...♘xc3

5...c5 *(D)* has been popular in the recent past. Black aims to utilize the e1-a5 diagonal as soon as possible, but the idea has lost much of its following.

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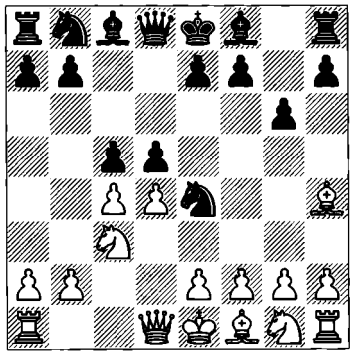


White has two continuations:

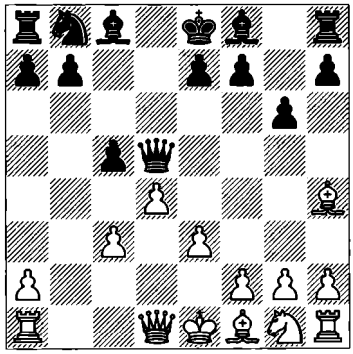
a) 6 e3 leads to original play. White strengthens the centre, not fearing the pin 6...♕a5. His idea is 7 ♕b3, defending and simultaneously attacking d5 and, given an opportunity, b7 and f7. However, 7...cxd4 8 exd4 ♗h6 (a novel place for the bishop, targeting the d2-square which has suddenly become vulnerable) 9 ♖d1 (the natural 9 ♘f3? is bad due to 9...g5 10 ♗g3 g4, when Black smashes though to d2) 9...♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♗e6 gives Black good chances. This line, popular some twenty years ago, is a rare guest in current practice.

b) 6 cxd5 leads to a well-known position after 6...♘xc3 7 bxc3 ♕xd5 8 e3 *(D)*.

Now:

b1) Black can agree to the queen exchange by 8...cxd4 9 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 10 cxd4, but then the h4-bishop turns out to be placed well, keeping the e7-pawn in its sights. The pawn must

B



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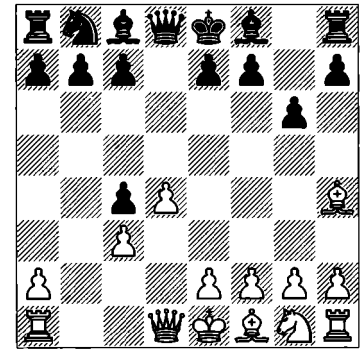


advance, and it is expedient that it should do so at once by 10...e6, while Black retains control over the d6-square; with the bishop already fianchettoed the white knight won't be able to resist the temptation to try to occupy that square. The other problem is developing the queenside without letting White infiltrate via the b- and c-files. Even if Black manages to overcome these difficulties and exchange off all the rooks, the resulting endgame has to be held with passive defence, which is, of course, not everyone's cup of tea: 11 ♘f3 ♗e7 12 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 13 h4 (aiming to fix the black kingside pawns on light squares) 13...h5 14 ♗d3 ♘c6 15 ♔d2 ♗d7 16 ♖ab1 ♖ab8 17 e4 ♖hc8 18 ♖hc1 ♘d8 19 ♘e5 ♖xc1 20 ♖xc1 ♖c8 21 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 22 f3, Jobava-Macieja, European Ch, Kusadasi 2006.

b2) Black can play 8...♗g7 first, so that the capture on d4 should not force the exchange of the queens (if Black prefers 8...♘c6 for the same purpose, White can seek another version of the exchange by 9 ♕f3, as a retreat along the d-file is bad because of 10 ♗c4, but 9...♕f5 is an option). Now 9 ♕f3 ♕d6 10 ♗b5+ ♘d7 11 ♘e2 cxd4 12 exd4 leads to a double-edged game, but if White develops with natural moves, Black's difficulties persist; for example, 9 ♘f3 cxd4 10 cxd4 ♘c6 11 ♗e2 0-0 12 0-0 ♗f5 13 ♘d2 ♕d7 14 ♗f3 ♘a5 15 ♕c1 ♖ae8 16 ♕a3, Jobava-Brkić, European Ch, Warsaw 2005.

6 bxc3 dxc4 *(D)*

Black's unwillingness to defend passively in the lines considered above in line 'b' of the previous note has brought this continuation to the forefront. Black voluntarily cedes the centre, but in return hopes to hold on to the extra pawn for a while or else take advantage of the enemy queen's early development.

7 e3

Or:

a) If White doesn't feel like offering a gambit, then 7 ♕a4+ is the only way and the only time to regain to the pawn. This continuation has not enjoyed much popularity, one of the reasons being the line 7...♕d7 8 ♕xc4 b6, when the bishop succeeds in getting out to a6, intending an exchange on f1 and so depriving White of the right to castle. In recent years White has made several attempts to prove that his potential superiority in the centre counts for more than the loss of castling, but has yet to achieve consistent success: 9 ♗g3 c5 10 ♗e5 ♗a6 11 ♕b3 f6 12 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 13 ♘f3 cxd4 14 cxd4 e6 15 e4 ♗xf1 16 ♔xf1 a5 17 h4 a4 18 ♕e3 ♗e7, Malakhatko-Harika, Gibraltar 2008. Black strives to generate counterplay based on his passed pawn on the queenside.

b) 7 e4 blocks the long light-squared diagonal and allows 7...b5. This type of formation is playable in some openings, but there Black has usually exchanged his bishop on c3, when White can hope to dominate the dark squares. Here, on the other hand, not only is the f8-bishop alive and well but its counterpart enjoys a rather poor view from h4.

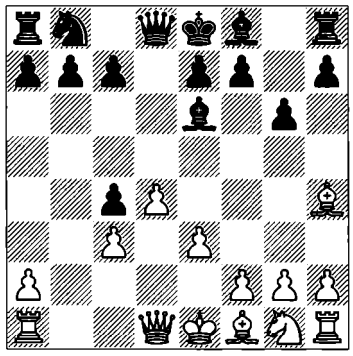
7...♗e6 *(D)*

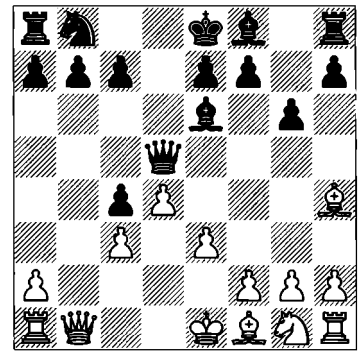
7...b5? is clearly bad here: 8 a4 c6 9 axb5 cxb5 10 ♕f3. Therefore the pawn has to be defended in an unnatural fashion, although Black's suffering has a good cause.

8 ♕b1

Besides this move, 8 ♘f3 and 8 ♖b1 are also played. White aims to provoke ...b6, in order to combine later the weakening of the diagonal with the threat of winning back the c4-pawn and the harassment of the e6-bishop.

After 8 ♘f3, here is an example typical of both sides' chances: 8...♗g7 9 ♖b1 b6 10 ♘d2





0-0 11 ♗e2 c5 12 ♗f3 cxd4 13 cxd4?! ♘d7 14 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 with ample compensation for the exchange, Moiseenko-Svidler, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2005. If Black tries to refrain from playing ...b6, then another typical pattern of play is possible: 8...c6 9 ♘g5 ♗d5 10 e4 h6 11 exd5 hxg5 12 dxc6 ♘xc6 13 ♗xg5 ♕d5. In this case too, the radical violation of the relative equilibrium promises an uncompromising fight.

In response to 8 ♖b1 the reply 8...♘d7 is popular, agreeing to return the pawn for the sake of rapid development. Fans of non-standard material balances may be interested in the curious forced line 9 ♕a4 ♗d5 10 ♗xc4 ♗xg2 11 ♕b3 ♗h6 12 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 13 ♗d5 ♘c5 14 ♗xg2 ♘xb3 15 ♖xb3. White has only two pieces for the queen, but the difference in the activity of the opposing armies is evident. After 15...b5 or 15...b6 it is illogical to win the exchange. On the other hand, now the knight has a path to c6 open and if White succeeds in capturing the e7-pawn, his superiority in the centre will be a weighty factor. Nevertheless, Black's extra material should be more important.

8...♕d5 *(D)*

In reply to 8...b6, White can choose the interesting 9 ♘h3, when 9...♗xh3 leaves White's light-squared bishop unopposed and is not prudent. Black is better advised to give up his dark-squared bishop to prevent ♘f4 and play 9...♗h6. After 10 ♗g5 ♗xg5 11 ♘xg5 ♕d5 the position is simplified, although a small advantage remains for White.

The text-move brings the queen out to d5 not only to defend the b7-pawn but also for a transit stopover on the way to a5.

9 a4

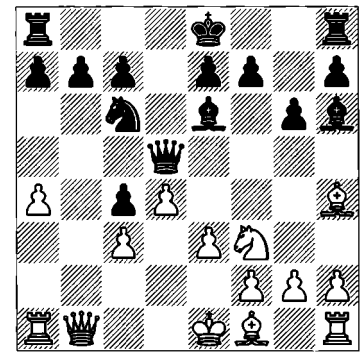
Before this game White usually chose between knight moves here. The f4-square appears attractive but due to the threats of ...e5 and ...g5 requires additional security measures. In reply to 9 ♘e2 Black should prudently withdraw with 9...♗c8, protecting the b7-pawn and freeing the queen from guard duty. 9 ♘f3 looks more natural, intending a transfer to d2 once development is complete. Aronian-Svidler, Tal Memorial, Moscow 2006 continued 9...♘d7 10 ♗e2 ♗f5 11 ♕b2 ♗g7 12 0-0 ♘b6 13 a4 a5 14 ♘d2 ♗d3. Black didn't really plan to come out from the opening with a healthy extra pawn, of course, and is ready to return it for the sake of completing his development harmoniously.

The text-move aims at making Black's knight lose interest in a trip to b6 and, according to the situation, can lead to an exchange of queens on b5 or a further pawn advance to a5.

9...♘c6

Black does not begrudge giving up a couple of pawns – 10 ♕xb7 ♖b8 11 ♕xc7 ♗h6 – for such an advantage in development.

10 ♘f3 ♗h6 *(D)*



11 ♗e2

Noting that the black bishop is no longer a threat to the a3-square, and a comfortable way to defend the c3-pawn has appeared, White has

been encouraged to advance in the centre in some games: 11 e4 ♕a5 12 ♖a3.

11...g5 *(D)*

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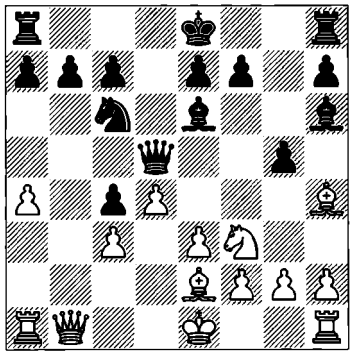

Planning to castle queenside and taking advantage of the fact that the g2-pawn is left unprotected, Black decides to advance against the opponent's likely castled position.

12 ♗g3

The complications after 12 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 13 ♘xg5 ♕xg5 14 ♕xb7 ♔d7 are not in White's favour, but 12 e4 ♕a5 13 0-0 deserved consideration.

12...g4 13 ♘h4 f5 14 0-0 0-0-0

Black can be happy with the outcome of the opening. He has succeeded in keeping the pawn and laid the foundation for the development of an initiative on the kingside.

15 ♗d1

White could have played 15 a5, in order to use this pawn to disturb the enemy king, while also freeing the a4-square for the rook. The immediate capture 15...♘xa5?, perilous in itself, runs into a tactical refutation: 16 ♗e5 ♖hf8 17 ♗xg4 fxg4 18 e4. Therefore on the next move the queen assumes blockading duties, uncharacteristic of so respectable a piece.

15...♕a5 16 ♗c2 ♖hf8 17 ♕b2 ♗g5 18 ♖ab1 b6 19 ♖be1 ♗xh4

This way Black gets rid of the pressure on f5 and gains an opportunity to activate the other bishop. However, the exchange of such a valuable piece for a knight that risked being left out of the game looks strange. The logical continuation was to continue hindering White's freeing advances; for example, 19...♗d7 or 19...a6, when the only possible active move, 20 f4, renders the g3-bishop passive after 20...♗f6.

20 ♗xh4 ♗d5 21 ♗g3

White could have chosen 21 e4 fxe4 22 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♕xa4 24 ♖a1 ♕b3 25 ♕c1, when the compensation may be sufficient. However, his appetite has grown, and he contrives an ambitious plan of creating a pawn-centre, despite the weakening of his king's position.

21...h5 22 f3 gxf3 23 gxf3 *(D)*

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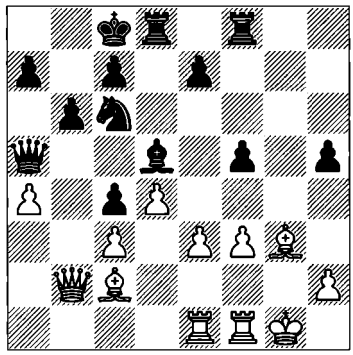

23...f4

This starts a long forced operation that could have ended in a draw. Black's decision was not forced, as his position is not worse, and he had several attractive continuations at his disposal, such as 23...a6 or 23...♔b8.

24 ♗xf4 ♘xd4 25 cxd4 ♖g8+ 26 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 27 ♖e2 ♖g2+ 28 ♔xg2 ♕xe2+ 29 ♖f2 *(D)*

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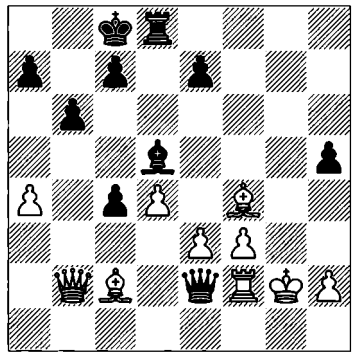

29...♖g8+?!

29...♗xf3+ leads to an instant draw: 30 ♔h3 ♗g4+ 31 ♔g3 h4+ 32 ♔g2 ♗f3+ 33 ♔h3 ♗g4+. The choice of another continuation is not justified logically, given that if he wanted to, White could have forced a repetition of moves there too.

30 ♗g3 ♗xf3+ 31 ♔h3 ♗g4+ 32 ♔h4

The return to g2 would have obliged Black to force a perpetual check. The trip forward looks

very risky, but actually only White has winning chances.

32...♕xe3 33 ♕b5 ♕xd4 34 ♕e5 ♕d8 35 ♖d2 ♗d7 *(D)*

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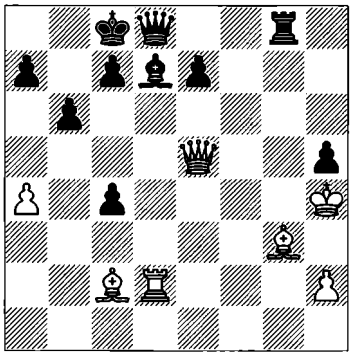

36 ♖d4?!

The exchange sacrifice 36 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 37 ♗e4 allows White to nullify the threats against his king and obtain a lasting initiative. In a few moves' time, in order to play for a win he has to offer this sacrifice in a less favourable situation.

36...e6+ 37 ♔xh5 ♗e8+?

After 37...♕e8+ 38 ♔h4 ♕d8+ the repetition of moves can be avoided only with 39 ♔h3, when 39...♖g5 forces 40 ♖xd7 ♔xd7. Here the white king feels less secure than in the line from the previous note. Perhaps Black is playing for a win as well?

38 ♔h6 ♕e7 39 ♖f4 ♗f7?!

This move loses at once, but it is already difficult to suggest a defence.

40 ♕f6?

This allows Black to force a draw. 40 ♖xc4 ♕f8+ 41 ♔h7 wins immediately.

40...♕f8+ 41 ♔h7 *(D)*

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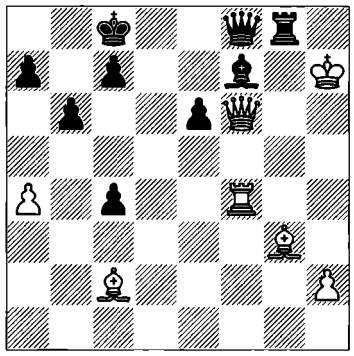

Now that's something – the commander in front of his army. Black's following moves are hard to comment on – perhaps he was in time-trouble.

41...♔b8?!

Here there was a drawing trick: 41...♖g6 42 ♗xg6 ♗g8+ 43 ♔h8 ♗f7+. This idea was also possible on the next move, but again he failed to find it.

42 ♖f2 e5? 43 ♕xe5 1-0

Game 21 [D91]

Yuri Kuzubov – Pavel Elianov

Moscow 2005

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♗g5 *(D)*

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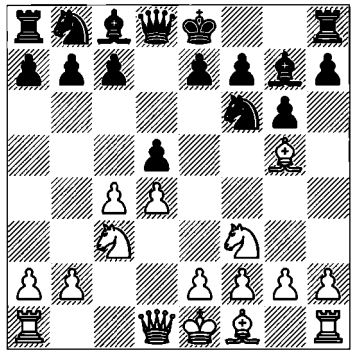
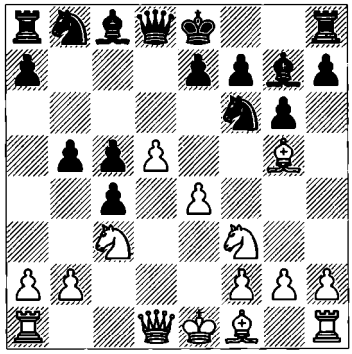


5...♘e4

This reaction is already familiar to us. The difference from the development of the bishop to g5 a move earlier is that here it is protected, and White has a wider selection of options to choose from. A retreat to f4 or h4 returns us to the previous game, while the exchange on e4 is clearly worse, but the capture on d5 becomes possible and is the main continuation.

If Black is after more novel positions, he can try 5...dxc4, when 6 e3 ♗e6 leaves him quite solid, although if White also wants something spicier there is an original dish on the menu: 6 e4 c5 7 d5 b5 *(D)*.

W



White has a choice: he can go for the murky 8 e5 b4 9 exf6 exf6 10 ♕e2+ ♔f8 11 ♗e3 bxc3 12 ♗xc5+ ♔g8 13 bxc3 ♘d7, or prefer the even sharper 8 d6; for example, how do you like this line: 8...♗b7 9 dxe7 ♕xe7 10 e5 ♘bd7 (10...♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 ♕xe5+ 12 ♗e3 b4 is stronger) 11 ♕e2 ♗xf3 12 exf6.

6 cxd5 ♘xg5

Also seen is 6...♘xc3 with familiar motifs, except that White hasn't spent a tempo on retreating the bishop and developed the knight instead. So generally speaking, it is seen as more natural and logical to capture the bishop.

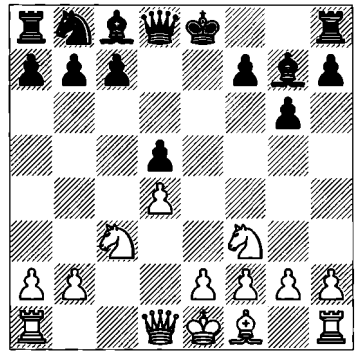
7 ♘xg5 e6

If the other pawn steps forward by 7...c6, then besides accepting the gambit with 8 dxc6 ♘xc6 9 d5 or 9 e3 e5 10 d5 ♕xg5 11 dxc6 0-0 12 h4 White can play the simple 8 ♘f3, and Black's position is more boring than in the main lines. Black should also be ready to meet the tricky move 8 ♕b3.

8 ♕d2

8 ♘f3 exd5 *(D)* leads to a quiet game.

W



This position features the so-called Carlsbad set-up, well known from the Queen's Gambit. There are some differences – a different set of minor pieces, the fianchettoed bishop – but that does not change the cardinal methods of playing such positions. White's principal plan is still the minority attack, i.e. a queenside advance to create weaknesses in Black's pawn-structure there. Once Black has played or been forced to play ...c6, White will seek to push the b-pawn to b5, when Black will have to decide what type of weakness to choose.

Black has several ways to impede White's progress: he can play the a-pawn to a5, so that in reply to b4 he can exchange or push forward and with the counter-thrust ...b5 create mutual weaknesses – c6 for himself, b4 (a3) for White, intending to shield his weakness with the transfer of the knight via b6 to c4. Another method is to play ...a6, and when White carries out a4 and b4-b5, push the pawn further by ...a5, partially avoiding the opening of lines; Black thus acquires a strong post on b4 and denies the white knight the possibility of manoeuvring via a4. Also, the position of the bishop on g7 sometimes makes the counter-thrust ...c5 possible in reply to b5.

Of course, Black's main counterplay should be based on an attack on the kingside, although if it includes the ...f5-f4 advance, then care must be taken that White cannot advantageously block the f5-pawn with f4, followed by occupation of e5.

In this system the play doesn't follow a forced course, and the players have considerable freedom in determining the desired set-up and the move-order used to reach it. The following serves as an example of some typical themes: 9 e3 0-0 10 ♗e2 c6 11 0-0 ♕e7 12 a3 ♗e6 13 b4 ♘d7 14 ♘e1 a5 15 ♘d3 b5 16 ♕d2 a4 17 ♘c5 ♘b6 18 ♖ae1 ♖ae8 19 ♗d3 ♗c8, Nakamura-V.Mikhalevski, Miami 2007.

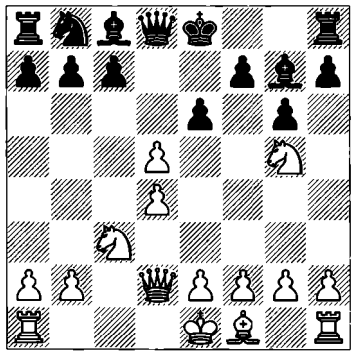
We now return to 8 ♕d2 *(D)*.

This queen move leads to more original positions.

8...h6

This preliminary attack on the knight sidesteps the following sharp and unclear line: 8...exd5 9 ♕e3+ ♔f8 10 ♕f4 ♗f6 11 h4 h6 (it is a bad idea to tolerate the knight any longer: after 11...♔g7?! 12 e4 dxe4 13 ♗c4 White seizes the initiative), when White can try the speculative 12 ♘xd5 ♗xg5 13 ♕e5 ♖h7 (13...f6 14 ♕xc7 ♕xd5 15 ♕xc8+ ♔g7! 16 ♕c7+ ♘d7 17

B



hxg5 fxg5 gives Black good compensation) 14 hxg5 ♘c6 15 ♕e4 ♗f5 16 ♕f3 ♘xd4 17 ♕a3+ ♔g7 18 ♘e3. The simple retreat 12 ♘f3 is also possible, with a complex struggle.

9 ♘h3

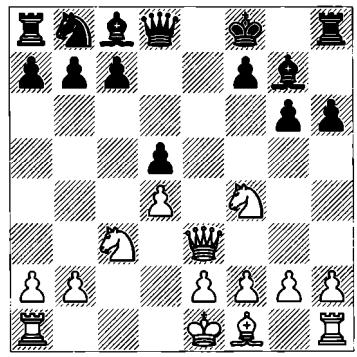
The choice of retreat is determined by where White likes the knight better – on f3 or f4. The Carlsbad formation is most likely here as well, and the post on f4 promises fresher play. The loss of a tempo is not significant in this case; the f3-square is also only a temporary stop before subsequent manoeuvres.

9...exd5 10 ♕e3+

This check vanished from practice after the current game. Depriving Black of the right to castle is a tempting idea, but the detriment to White's development proves no less significant. Today 10 ♘f4 is preferred.

10...♔f8 11 ♘f4 *(D)*

B



11...c5

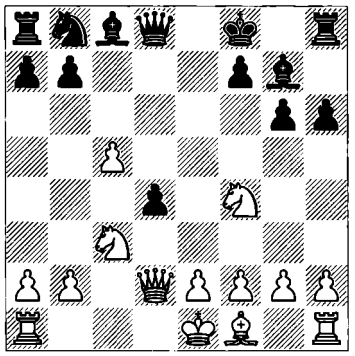
The most principled continuation. In case of 11...c6 12 ♕f3 ♔g8 13 e3 the white pieces are posted well, and the weakening of Black's kingside pawn-formation justifies preparations for an advance on that part of the board.

12 dxc5

12 ♕f3?! is quite suspect, as the threat of taking on g6 does not frighten Black. After 12...cxd4 13 ♘cxd5 ♔g8 the white king has more problems.

12...d4 13 ♕d2 *(D)*

B



13...♘c6!

This move had not previously enjoyed much popularity before Elianov demonstrated its power. The knight clearly has two other options:

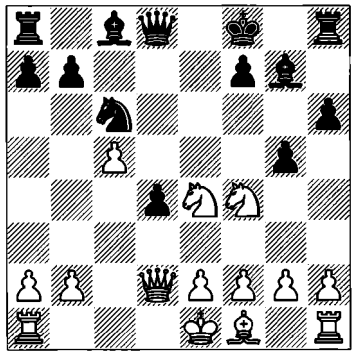
a) 13...♘a6 plans different routes for the knight, with the elimination of the c5-pawn in the process, but doesn't threaten a capture on c3 and gives White a tempo for an attack against the d4-pawn. The following entertaining draw is a good example: 14 e3 ♗f5 15 ♖d1 dxc3 16 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 17 ♖xd8+ ♔e7 18 ♖xh8 cxb2 19 ♘d5+ ♔e6 20 ♘f4+ ♔f6 21 ♘d5+ ♔e6 ½-½ Markus-Elianov, European Under-18 Team Ch, Balatonlelle 2000.

b) 13...♘d7 has the positive aspect of forcing the c3-knight to move, but obstructs the bishop. We should warn the knight against taking the path leading to the left: 14 ♘a4?! b5 15 cxb6 axb6 16 ♕b4+ ♔g8, when in Freisler-Henrichs, Pardubice 2007 White decided that he could afford the developing 17 g3?. In reply Black ingeniously cleared the bishop's diagonal by 17...♗f8 18 ♕xd4 ♗g7 19 ♕e4 ♖xa4 20 ♕xa4 ♗xb2, and it transpired that White had to give up the rook, remaining a piece down.

14 ♘e4 g5 *(D)*

For the moment such an advance cannot be called a weakening. It is hard to make an omelette without breaking eggs, so Black pushes away the white pieces, seizing the centre and ignoring the holes that appear. Now if the initiative fails to bring the desired results, then White

W



will be able to raise the issue of weaknesses. For the time being there is no reason for the knight to go to h5 – the exchange of the bishop and the simplification of the position are not a bad idea, of course, but in the process the enemy rooks are connected and the extra pawn has to be returned.

15 ♘d3 ♕d5 16 ♘d6 ♗e6 *(D)*

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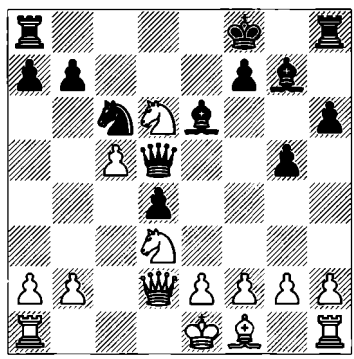

The critical position of the game and the entire variation with 13...♘c6. White has an extra pawn and great difficulties in completing his development. Another worry is the outwardly beautiful knight on d6 whose position is in fact unstable, and it is hard to see how it could be manoeuvred to a more secure post. White bases his hopes for a successful outcome on the fact that Black is also yet to liberate the h8-rook from imprisonment. At the moment there are no grounds for panic.

17 ♖g1?

The capture 17 ♘xb7 is met by 17...♘e5, when the second pawn has to be returned, and meanwhile the position has been opened and the black bishops have become more active.

17 e4 is a radical attempt to resolve the situation. After 17...dxe3 18 fxe3 b6 19 ♘b5 ♖d8 20 ♘c7 or 20 ♘c3 it is hardly prudent to seek an advantage, but returning the pawn at the right moment gives real chances of equality.

If White has nerves of steel that allow him to tolerate the static onlookers on f1 and h1, the rest of the pieces can embark on a local operation on the queenside, initiated with 17 b4, 17 ♖c1 or 17 ♘b5, striving to expel the black forces from the centre and complete development.

The move chosen by White takes the last chance of a trip to the kingside away from the white king. While it is in the centre, getting through to it is not a difficult task.

17...♘e5 *(D)*

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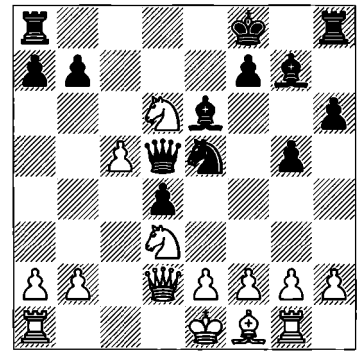

Removing the c5-pawn's defender and clarifying the situation in the centre.

18 g3?

A pointless loss of a tempo in an already grave position. 18 ♖c1 or 18 g4 at least made some sense.

18...♘xd3+ 19 exd3 ♕xc5 20 ♘e4 ♕e7 *(D)*

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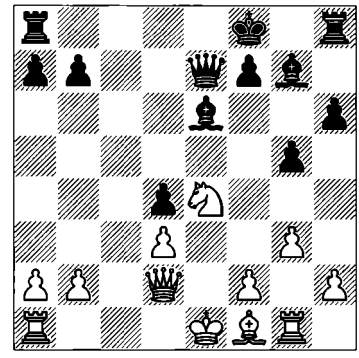


Additionally it transpires that the knight has nowhere to move to.

21 ♕e2?!

Some sort of resistance could have been organized with 21 g4, clinging to the e4 post.

21...f5 22 ♘d2 ♖e8 23 0-0-0 ♕c7+ 24 ♔b1 ♕f7

Wishing to extract the maximum. Besides the capture on a2, 25...♗d5 is threatened, and there is not even a hint of compensation for the queen.

0-1

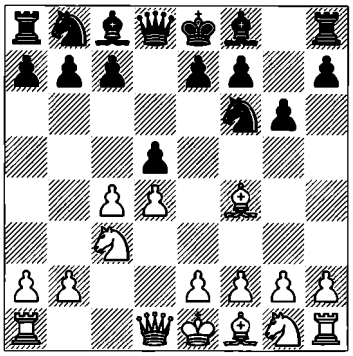
Game 22 [D82]

Hikaru Nakamura – Sergey Kudrin

USA Ch, San Diego 2004

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♗f4 *(D)*

B



Before playing e3, White brings out the bishop to a solid central post.

4...♗g7 5 e3

White has several possible plans of development, and some choice in terms of the move-order too. One of the key factors is the assessment of the possible ...♘h5. A number of systems feature the move ♖c1, where the rook hinders ...c5. Here the text-move and 5 ♘f3 appear to be the most natural moves, and with these continuations the black knight's move to the edge of the board fails to yield benefits and looks absurd. The immediate 5 ♖c1 is also played, but it is precisely here that 5...♘h5 is not bad. The bishop can return home with 6 ♗d2 or stay out in the field by 6 ♗g5 h6 7 ♗h4, reckoning that the tempo it has lost will be outweighed by the time spent on the enemy knight's leap. In both cases there are two plans of approximately equal value: the standard play with ...dxc4, followed by ...♗e6, or the thematic ...c5 counterblow in the centre. Here is a possible course of events: 6 ♗g5 h6 7 ♗h4 c5 8 e3 cxd4 9 ♘xd5 ♘c6 10 exd4 ♗xd4 11 ♕d2 g5 12 ♗e2 ♘f6 13 ♘f3 ♗b6 14 ♘xf6+ exf6 15 ♕xd8+ ♗xd8 16 ♗g3 ♗a5+ 17 ♔f1, and the outcome of the opening suits Black just fine, I.Sokolov-Svidler, Wijk aan Zee 2004.

We shall examine the variations that are tied to 5 ♘f3 and have independent significance in the next game.

5...c5

With White having protected the d4-pawn, capturing on c7 becomes a genuine threat. If that does not frighten Black, he can choose 5...0-0 *(D)*.

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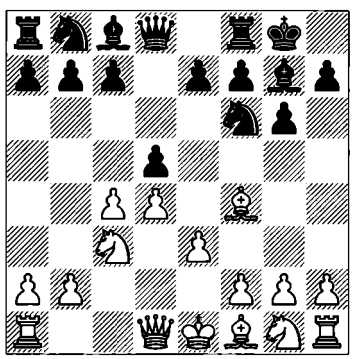
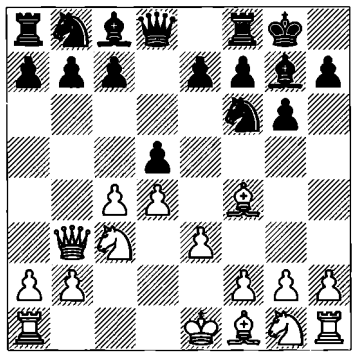


a) The most critical reply is clearly to accept: 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 8 ♗xc7. Then the sacrificed pawn can be regained at once with 8...♘a6 9 ♗xa6 (a retreat by the bishop not only means a loss of time but also makes the a5-square available to Black, who obtains a sufficient initiative on the queenside) 9...♕xg2, when the endgame after 10 ♕f3 ♕xf3 11 ♘xf3 bxa6 is considered to give White a small advantage, but is quite acceptable for Black; for example, 12 ♖c1 ♗b7 13 ♔e2 ♖ac8 14 ♖hd1 f6 15 d5 f5 16 b4 ♗b2 17 ♖c5 a5. Now the precipitate 18 ♗xa5? ♗c3! suddenly presented White with an unpleasant discovery in Vallejo Pons-V.Mikhalevski, Calvia 2007: Black's threats of 19...♖xc5 and 19...♗a6+ cannot be parried simultaneously. Black also has a riskier but more belligerent

option: 8...♘c6 9 ♘e2 (the c3-square is more enticing than f3) 9...♗g4 10 f3 ♖ac8 11 ♘c3 ♕e6 12 ♗f4, and here Black sacrifices a piece with a capture on d4, obtaining a strong attack, although it is not clear whether it is sufficient.

b) Naturally, White is not compelled to take on c7. Let's dwell a bit on the move 6 ♕b3 *(D)*.

B

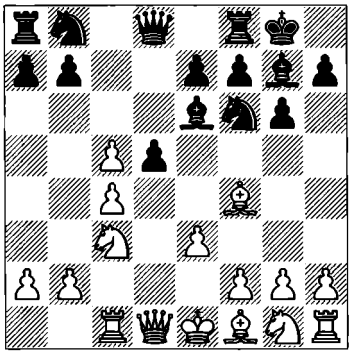


The idea behind this lunge is the same as we saw in Chapter 6 – to put pressure on d5. Ceding the centre by 6...dxc4 is less appealing than in the Russian System, as White is ready to recapture with the bishop, not allowing Black the fun of chasing the queen about. The choice of the reply comes down to this: should Black defend or counterattack? Defence is 6...c6. This position often arises from the Slav Defence and can equally well claim to belong to that opening. Black is not likely to manage to maintain his grip on d5, but for now he opens a road to a5 and lays down preparatory work for the deployment of the queenside by ...dxc4, ...b5, ...♗e6 and at the right moment ...b4; he will also attempt, one way or another, to avoid being left with a weak pawn on c6.

The counterattack 6...c5 also shares the field with another opening, this time the Caro-Kann Defence. Events can develop as follows: 7 cxd5 cxd4 8 exd4 ♘bd7 9 ♗e2 ♘b6 10 ♗f3 ♗f5 11 ♖d1 ♕d7 12 h3 h5 13 ♘ge2 ♖fd8 14 d6 exd6 with chances for both sides.

c) The main difference between the various lines is in the order in which the moves e3, ♘f3 and ♖c1 are combined. In this game White began with e3; let's examine it in combination with 6 ♖c1. Here too, 6...c6 and 6...dxc4 are played, but 6...c5 must be recognized as the most principled continuation, and we shall pause to examine it in some detail. After 7 cxd5 cxd4 8 ♕xd4 ♘xd5 there is no question of an advantage, so White chooses 7 dxc5, to which 7...♗e6 *(D)* is considered to be the most solid reaction (another idea is 7...♕a5 8 cxd5, though Black hasn't demonstrated full compensation with either 8...♖d8 or 8...♘e4).

W



Now 8 ♘ge2 is sometimes played, intending after a double exchange on d5 to occupy the vacant c3-square, but the obvious and principal continuation is 8 ♘f3 – a normal developing move that also offers prospects of disturbing the e6-bishop from d4 or g5. We shall note these replies to the natural continuation 8...♘c6 *(D)*:

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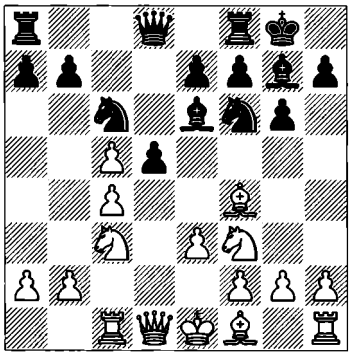


c1) In case of 9 ♘d4 ♘xd4 10 exd4 dxc4 Black has nothing to complain about, with his control over d5 and a subsequent undermining ...b6.

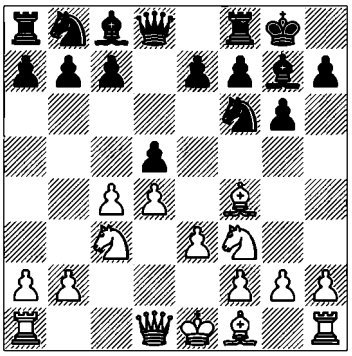
c2) After 9 ♘g5 Black must choose between 9...♕a5 10 ♗e2 ♖ad8 11 ♘xe6 fxe6 12 ♕a4 ♕xc5 and the razor-sharp line with a piece sacrifice 9...♗g4 10 f3 e5 11 cxd5 exf4 12 dxc6 ♕e7.

c3) 9 ♗e2 ♘e4 leads to a quieter game; for example, 10 0-0 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 dxc4 12 ♘g5

♗d7 13 ♗xc4 ♘a5, when the condition of the extra pawn leaves much to be desired, while Black has a normal position.

d) Let's move on to another move-set – e3 + ♘f3, that is 6 ♘f3 *(D)*.

B



Here as well the most interesting continuation is 6...c5. For the same reason as in line 'c' White replies with 7 dxc5, and Black tries to take advantage of one of the newly-opened diagonals using the already-familiar methods:

d1) 7...♘e4 – the bishop's desire to find work on the long diagonal is commendable. White's attempt to neutralize the pressure with his own bishop promises little: 8 ♗e5 ♗xe5 9 ♘xe5 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♕a5. After 8 ♖c1 ♘xc3 9 bxc3 there is a choice between the acceptable ending 9...dxc4 10 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 11 ♗xc4, with real chances of regaining the pawn, and 9...♕a5, when Black is ready for a different version of the pawn sacrifice: 10 cxd5 ♘d7 11 ♕b3 ♘xc5 12 ♕b4 ♕b6, with compensation.

d2) 7...♕a5 is another well-trodden path. Black threatens to include two more combat units at once in the attack on c3, so it's time to take defensive measures: 8 ♖c1 dxc4 (8...♘e4 9 cxd5 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 transposes to a line given just above in line 'd1') 9 ♗xc4 ♕xc5 *(D)*.

The pawn-centre has disappeared, leaving a symmetrical formation. Often this translates into the reduction of the positional tension, but Black still has to neutralize White's small development advantage and the threats against the black queen, whose early entry into the centre has left it facing an assault by the enemy pieces. The immediate attempt to take advantage of this circumstance with 10 ♘b5 is parried by 10...♗e6, when 11 ♗xe6 runs into 11...♕xb5, 11 ♗d3 (or 11 ♗e2) is met with

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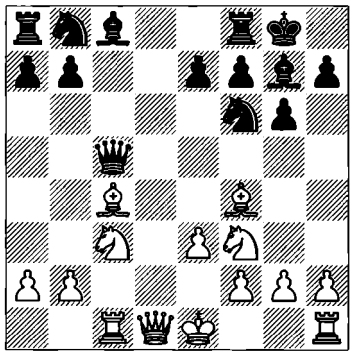

11...♕b4+ 12 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ and 13...♘a6, while grabbing the exchange by 11 ♘c7 is risky due to 11...♗xc4 12 b3 ♕b4+ 13 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 14 ♘xd2 ♗d3 15 ♘xa8 ♘d5, Inkiov-Lputian, Saint John 1988. Therefore White completes his development with 10 ♗b3 ♕a5 11 0-0 ♘c6, retaining superior piece control over the centre squares. The main events develop after 12 h3 ♗f5 13 ♕e2 ♘e4 14 ♘d5 e5: the sacrifice of the exchange for two pawns by 15 ♖xc6 bxc6 16 ♘e7+ ♔h8 17 ♘xc6 ♕b6 18 ♘cxe5 ♗e6 is not considered dangerous, although after 15 ♗h2 Black still experiences some difficulties.

By choosing an earlier ...c5 (as in our main game), Black avoids some of the lines we have examined in this note, including the one with the capture on c7, but the uncastled position of his king grants White a selection of other continuations.

6 dxc5 ♕a5 *(D)*

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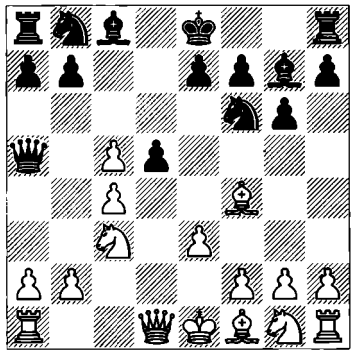


7 ♖c1

One of the new ideas is 7 ♕a4+, but this is not considered to be dangerous for Black. The knight's trip to the edge of the board following 7...♕xa4 8 ♘xa4 allows White's extra pawn to be kept for a while, but as the mobilization of

the black army progresses, this task becomes increasingly untenable. Here is an example: 8...♗d7 (another reliable continuation is 8...0-0) 9 ♘c3 ♘e4 10 ♘xd5 ♘a6 11 f3 ♘exc5 12 0-0-0 e6 13 ♘c3 ♗xc3 14 bxc3 f6 15 g4 0-0-0, Portisch-Ruck, Zalaegerszeg 2004.

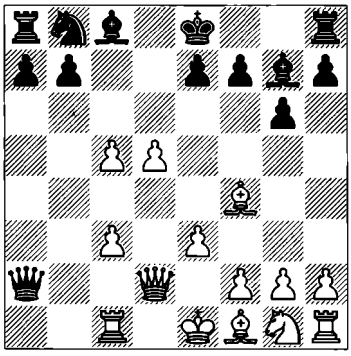
7...♘e4

Black can play 7...dxc4 8 ♗xc4 0-0, when 9 ♘f3 transposes into note 'd2' to Black's 5th move, but White has retained the option of developing the king's knight to e2, where it possesses different functional capabilities: 9 ♘e2 ♕xc5 10 ♕b3 ♘c6 11 ♘b5 ♕h5 12 ♘g3 ♕h4 13 ♘c7. Now Black is considered to have sufficient counterplay after 13...e5, although this whole line is quite sharp and concrete; some preparation is required for players who wish to venture into it.

8 cxd5 ♘xc3 9 ♕d2 ♕xa2 10 ♖xc3

This is not so much an exchange sacrifice as the desire to keep the c5-pawn, with which White has to part after 10 bxc3 *(D)*.

B



White obviously has the upper hand in the centre, but Black has a passed pawn ready to advance, which, supported by the g7-bishop, can quickly become a real threat. The immediate queen exchange 10...♕xd2+ 11 ♔xd2 has been tested, as without the queens an advance in the centre does not look as fearsome, but then in order to regain the pawn Black has to acquiesce to other concessions: 11...♘d7 12 ♗b5 0-0 13 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 14 e4. White is preparing a secure defence of the extra pawn from e3, and the attempt at counterplay with 14...f5 is met by 15 e5, aiming to wall up the fianchettoed bishop; e.g., 15...♖fc8 16 c4 ♖xc5 17 ♗e3 and 18 f4. The struggle to gain some breathing space for this bishop by 15...e6 leads to curtailing the freedom of the light-squared one: 16 c4 ♖fc8 17 c6 bxc6 18 d6 g5 19 ♗xg5 ♗xe5 20 c5.

More often Black retreats with 10...♕a5, not putting off the elimination of the c5-pawn for long. The main discussion is centred on 11 ♗c4 (the bishop takes up an insecure position but is ready to retreat to a2, where it blocks the passed pawn's way and hinders the e7-pawn's advance) 11...♘d7 12 ♘f3 ♘xc5 with chances for both sides.

We now return to 10 ♖c3 *(D)*:

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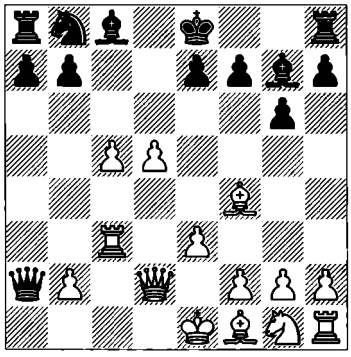


10...0-0

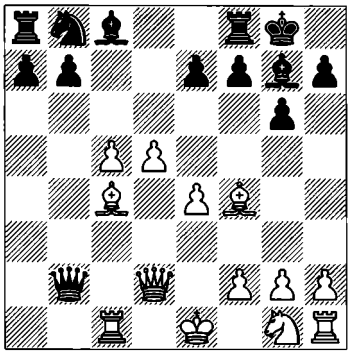
Black has to be an inveterate optimist to grab such an exchange. After 10...♗xc3 11 ♕xc3 f6 (or first 11...♕a1+ 12 ♔d2 f6) White has in compensation a pawn, a powerful centre, an advantage in development and the chronically insecure black king, so we can evaluate this continuation unequivocally in White's favour.

11 ♗c4 ♕a1+

An attempt to regain the c5-pawn anyway has found no followers: 11...♕a5 12 ♖c2 ♕xc5 13 d6, and White seizes the initiative.

12 ♖c1 ♕xb2 13 e4 *(D)*

B

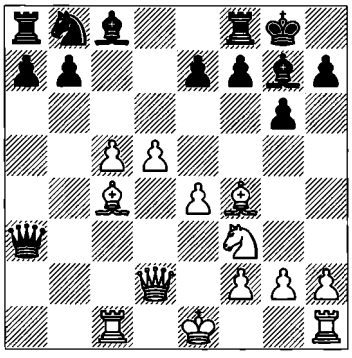


13...♕a3

In a later game Lukacs-Ruck, Hungarian Team Ch 2005/6, Black preferred 13...♘d7 14 ♗e3 and only now 14...♕a3 15 ♗b5 ♘e5 16 ♗d4 ♘d3+ 17 ♗xd3 ♗xd4 18 ♘f3 ♗g7 with an approximately even game.

14 ♘f3 *(D)*

B



White's centralized army looks formidable and demands of Black concrete counter-action; merely advancing the a-pawn will not suffice.

14...♕xc5?!

A very risky decision; either way of developing the knight was to be preferred. The forced sequence that follows renders the black king's position critical.

15 d6 ♕a3 16 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 17 ♗g5?!

Of several tempting continuations, White picks one of the least effective. 17 ♘g5 (or 17 h4 at once with an extremely strong attack) 17...♘c6 18 h4 looks very menacing.

17...♘c6 18 dxe7 ♘xe7 19 ♖c7 ♕a1+ 20 ♖c1 ♕a3 21 ♖c7 ♕a1+ 22 ♔e2?

Recklessness. The attempt to take advantage of the brief removal of the queen from the game fails, and from now on it is White who has to seek a draw.

22...♕xh1 23 ♗xe7 ♗g4

The tempting 23...b6?! can be met by 24 ♗c4 ♗g4 25 ♗xf8 ♖xf8, when White can at the very least start the pursuit of the enemy rook along the seventh rank by 26 ♖f7.

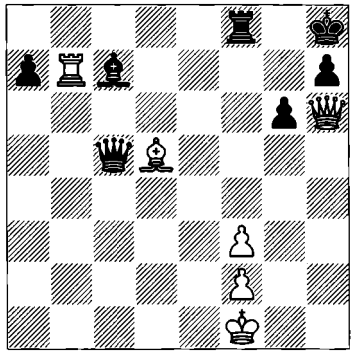
24 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 25 h3 ♗xf3+ 26 gxf3 ♕xh3 27 ♖xb7 ♕c8 28 ♗d5 ♕c5 29 e5?

A sharp move, not justified by necessity. The following part of the game may have taken place in time-trouble. It is doubtful that White was still striving for victory; perhaps he feared the prospect of protracted defence in the end-game, so he attempted to activate his main trump. Actually, after an exchange of queens Black has a purely symbolic advantage at best, so something like 29 ♕b4 is appropriate.

29...♗xe5 30 ♕h6 ♗c7 31 ♔f1 *(D)*

31 ♖xc7? fails because of the zwischenzug 31...♖e8+, which is why White withdraws his king.

B



31...♖b8?

Missing the win that could have been secured by 31...♖f4, disrupting White's control of the c1-square and threatening 32...♕c1+ and 33...♖g4/e4+ or 32...♕xd5 with the subsequent route ...♕d1+ – ...♕xf3+.

32 ♕h4 ♕c1+ 33 ♔g2 ♕f4 34 ♕xf4 ½-½

Game 23 [D92]

Jiři Lechtynsky – Jiři Štoček

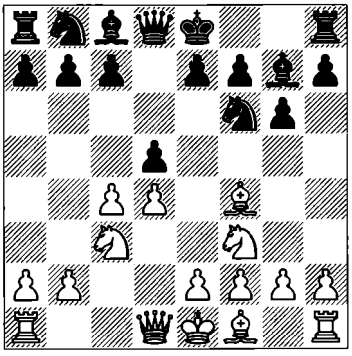
Czech Ch, Karlovy Vary 2005

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 c4 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 d5 5 ♗f4 *(D)*

In this game we move on to lines where White first of all plays ♗f4 and ♘f3 before deciding on further development. Naturally, the moves e3 and ♖c1 are still very much on the agenda.

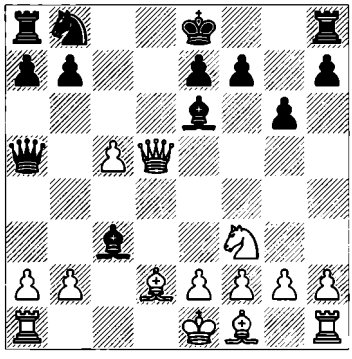
5...0-0

B



By moving to f3, the knight defended d4, so as in the previous game, the c7-pawn has come under attack. And likewise, Black can parry this attack with the standard undermining thrust 5...c5 prior to castling. This has specific features of its own that distinguish it from the lines we saw in Game 22, the main one being that the f4-bishop's retreat back to the defence is not cut off, and so after 6 dxc5 ♕a5 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 (after 7...♘e4 8 ♗e5 or 8 ♗d2 it is difficult to regain the pawn) 8 ♕xd5 ♗xc3+, White can play 9 ♗d2. Now the line 9...♗xd2+ 10 ♕xd2 ♕xc5 11 ♖c1 ♕f5 12 ♘d4 ♕d7 13 ♕h6 fails to rouse Black's enthusiasm, and Tseshkovsky devised the gambit 9...♗e6 *(D)*.

W



There are few grounds for seeking an advantage after 10 ♗xc3 ♕xc3+ 11 ♕d2, which is well met by both 11...♕xd2+, with 12...♘a6 to follow, and 11...♕xc5 at once. Thus the sacrifice has to be accepted with 10 ♕xb7 ♗xd2+ 11 ♘xd2 0-0. Now there is no point in taking the rook at once with 12 ♕xa8, as the reply 12...♖d8 threatens 13...♗d5, and the jab 13 b4 allows a perpetual check after 13...♕xb4 14 ♖d1 ♖xd2. Therefore 12 b4 is played earlier, when the queen is still on b7. Black has two replies:

a) 12...♕a4 retains control over the c6-square. Here the capture of the rook is again disadvantageous: 13 ♕xa8? ♘c6 14 ♕b7 ♖b8 15 ♕c7 ♖c8 16 ♕g3 ♘xb4 17 ♖c1 ♘c2+ 18 ♖xc2 ♕xc2, and Black has enough activity to win back the material. However, the main continuation 13 e3 presents Black with serious problems; for example, 13...♖d8 14 a3 ♕c2 15 ♖d1 ♗d5 16 ♕xe7 ♘c6 17 ♕f6 ♗b3 18 ♗e2 ♗a4 19 b5 ♘a5 20 ♘b3, and White succeeded in extricating himself and retaining the material advantage in Akhmetov-Turov, Moscow 2005.

b) 12...♕a3 moves the queen one square further and intends to counter 13 ♕xa8 with 13...♖d8. Besides the threat of 14...♗d5 Black keeps in reserve 14...♕b2 15 ♖d1 ♖xd2 with a perpetual check on b1 and b4 or c1 and c3, but it still has to be demonstrated how Black is to equalize after 14 e4, which parries both threats.

The general conclusion is that with this move-order the early ...c5 is not seeing its best days. But chess, like nature, appears to preserve a balance...

6 ♖c1

...because, on the other hand, there are fewer reasons to fear the capture on c7 than in the previous game. In the position after 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 8 ♗xc7 the white knight can no longer block the c-file, and Black develops according to the pattern ...♘c6, ...♗f5 and ...♖c8, obtaining prospects of invading on c2. If White disrupts the black knight's planned trip with a3, then Black secures a decent game by taking advantage of the weakened light squares on the queenside combined with the undermining thrust ...e5.

Since 6 e3 returns us to Game 22 (note 'd' to Black's 5th move, to be precise), only the text-move has independent significance.

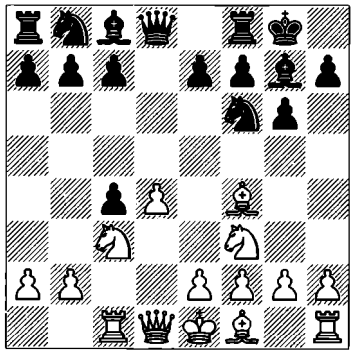
6...dxc4 *(D)*

The thematic 6...c5 usually transposes after 7 dxc5 ♗e6 into familiar positions. In the lines with the development of the queen to a5 White acquires the additional option of opposing it with the bishop on d2.

In taking on c4, Black makes a concession in the centre, but intends to inconvenience White with either threats to retain the c4-pawn or by a counterattack against the centre pawns if White plays e4.

7 e4

W

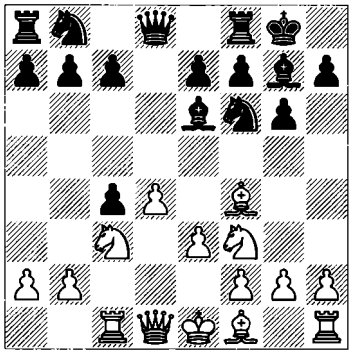


The alternative is the restrained 7 e3. Then:

a) Black can count on equality by playing 7...c5. In the resulting symmetrical position he must carefully neutralize the activity of White's better-centralized army. After 8 dxc5 ♕a5 the play boils down to the position examine in note 'd2' to Black's 5th move in Game 22. If White chooses another plan of development by 8 ♗xc4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4, there are several replies, including 9...♘bd7, 9...a6 and 9...♕a5. As an example one may suggest the following set-up: 9...♗d7 10 ♘b3 ♕b6 11 0-0 ♘a6, Lautier-Svidler, Biel 2001.

b) 7...♗e6 *(D)* is more ambitious.

W



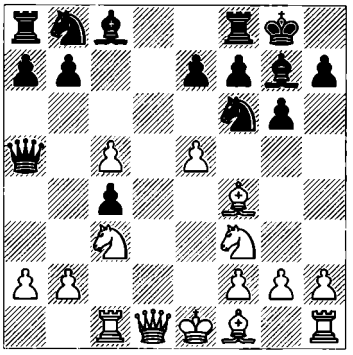
We saw a similar idea in Game 20. White needs to react in concrete fashion: 8 ♘g5 ♗d5 (8...♗g4 also has been tried, aiming to provoke 9 f3 then retreat with 9...♗c8; after preparing ...♘d5 with ...e6 or ...c6, Black endeavours to expose the weakness of the e3-pawn) 9 e4 (there is also an amusing continuation with a sacrifice of a piece: 9 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 10 ♗xc4 ♘xf4 11 ♕f3 – no refutation is apparent, but Black has no trouble equalizing; for example, 11...e6 12 ♕xf4 ♕f6) 9...h6 10 exd5 hxg5 11 ♗xg5 ♘xd5 (the sharp 11...b5 has been tested as well) 12 ♗xc4 ♘b6. The subsequent play must determine which factor is of more importance: the weakening of the black king's cover or the vulnerability of the white pawn on d4.

7...♗g4

For several years, studies focused on the sharp 7...b5, but nowadays Black's compensation for the pawn after 8 ♘xb5 ♘xe4 9 ♗xc7 ♕d7 10 ♗xc4 a6 11 ♘a3 ♘c6 12 0-0 ♗b7 13 ♗b6 is considered insufficient, and the line has disappeared from practice.

7...c5 is possible too. Here 8...b5 is a good reply to 8 d5, so White prefers 8 dxc5 ♕a5, and continues the attack in the centre with 9 e5 *(D)*.

B



Black has three replies:

a) 9...♘fd7 is the most passive. White's domination in the centre permits him to embark on favourable complications: 10 ♗xc4 ♘xc5 11 0-0 ♘c6 12 ♘d5 ♗e6 13 b4.

b) 9...♘h5 10 ♗e3 is double-edged. The knight has moved to the edge of the board, but Black wins back the pawn on e5, and it is not clear whether White's superiority on the queenside will prove to be the more significant factor.

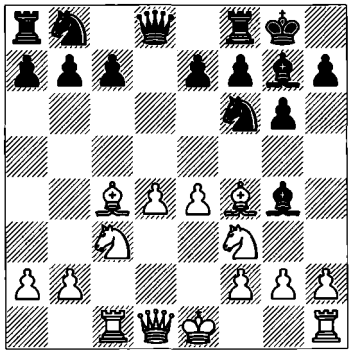
c) 9...♖d8 10 ♗d2 ♘g4 is the sharpest reply. 11 ♗xc4 and then:

c1) 11...♕xc5?! 12 ♘e4 ♕b6 leads to complications that favour White after 13 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 14 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 15 ♘fg5+ ♔g8 16 ♕xg4. Then 16...♘a6?? loses to 17 ♘d6!, but neither 16...♖f8 17 ♕h3 nor 16...♕c6 17 0-0! (e.g., 17...♘d7 18 ♘d6 or 17...♗xe5 18 ♕f3 ♖f8 19 ♕b3+ ♔h8 20 ♖e1) can satisfy Black either.

c2) After 11...♘c6, the lunge 12 ♘b5 brings White no benefit because of the exchange sacrifice 12...♖xd2 13 ♕xd2 ♕xd2+ 14 ♘xd2 ♘gxe5. White usually has to return the extra material to neutralize Black's activity.

8 ♗xc4 *(D)*

B



8...♘h5

The knight goes to the rim but hopes to take part in the struggle for the f4-square. The immediate 8...♗xf3 allows the 9 ♕xf3 recapture, when Black has two continuations available:

a) He can plant a knight in the centre by 9...♘c6 10 d5 ♘d4 11 ♕d3 c5, to be followed by an advance of the queenside pawns.

b) 9...♘h5 offers White a choice between parting with his light-squared bishop by 10 ♗g5 ♘c6 11 d5 ♘e5 12 ♕e2 or with the dark-squared one with 10 d5. White manages to keep the centre in decent shape, but the resulting exchanges reduce its value.

9 ♗e3 ♗xf3 10 gxf3

Here in reply to 10 ♕xf3, 10...♗xd4 is quite playable.

10...e5

Taking into account his opponent's bishop-pair, Black can give the game a more closed aspect by 10...e6. However, after 11 f4 ♕h4 (White should meet 11...♘c6, attempting to shuffle the move-order, with 12 d5, but not 12 e5 ♗h6, when White has to reply with 13 ♘e2, depriving his queen of the post on f3) 12 ♕f3 ♘c6 13 ♘e2 ♖ad8 14 ♖d1, White retains the centre and the better prospects.

11 dxe5 ♕h4?

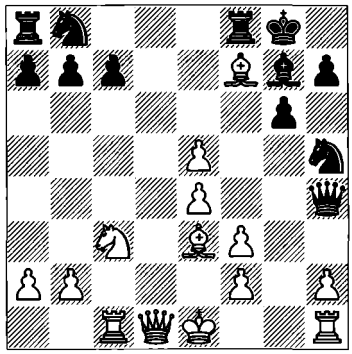
The position after 11...♗xe5 12 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 is considered fully acceptable for Black; White's advantage of the bishop-pair is offset by his slightly spoiled pawn-structure. White can try 12 ♗h6, when 12...♗g7?! can be met with 13 ♗xf7+!?, while after 12...♕xd1+?! 13 ♖xd1 Black has trouble completing his development, but the exchange sacrifice 12...♘c6 13 ♗xf8 ♕xf8 promises him sufficient counterchances.

Considering that the white king lacks a secure shelter, Black's desire to keep the queens on the board is understandable in general terms, but the text-move has a dubious reputation for a very concrete reason.

12 ♕d2?!

12 ♗xf7+! *(D)* is considered to give White a big advantage.

B



The lines after 12...♖xf7 13 e6 ♖f8 14 ♕b3 ♘a6 15 e7+ ♖f7 16 ♕xb7 ♖e8 are very sharp. However, White's decision to avoid these favourable complications is not objectively justified. The move in the game does not aspire to an advantage; on the contrary, the initiative passes to Black.

The other aggressive continuation is less effective: 12 e6?! fxe6 13 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 opens yet another centre file and gives Black good counterplay.

12...♘c6 13 f4

Black can meet the attempt to take advantage of his queen's precarious position by 13 h3 ♘xe5 14 ♗e2 with the pawn sacrifice 14...h6 15 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 16 ♕xh6 c6; the dark-squared blockade is more significant than the slight material loss.

13...♖ad8 14 ♘d5 ♘xe5

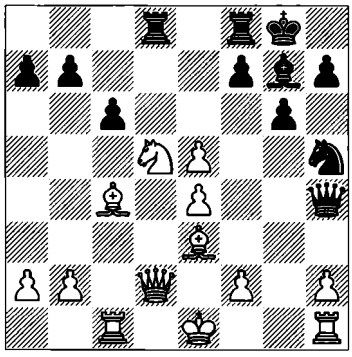
In view of the white king's position, Black's desire to clarify the situation in the centre to the maximum is understandable. The flanking blow 14...g5 is also interesting.

15 fxe5 c6 *(D)*

16 ♗d3?

White refuses to acknowledge what has happened. Winning the exchange this way or after 16 0-0? ♕g4+ 17 ♔h1 ♕xe4+ 18 f3 ♕xe5 19 ♗c5 cxd5 20 ♗xf8 puts him on the brink of defeat, perhaps even beyond it. It was time to

W



begin the struggle for salvation with 16 ♕e2 cxd5 17 ♗xd5 ♘f4 18 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 19 ♕e3 (or 19 0-0), when the powerful bishop on d5 grants White good chances of survival.

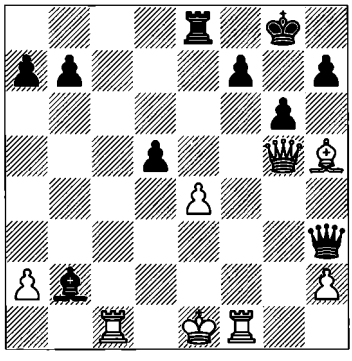
16...cxd5 17 ♗g5 ♕g4 18 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 19 f3

White sobers up. Black has many ways of creating threats, and it is too late to try to stabilize the position, so White starts seeking counterplay without worrying too much about material parity. The pawn is given up in order to open the f-file and target f7.

19...♕xf3 20 ♖f1 ♕h3 21 ♕g5 ♖e8 22 ♗e2 ♗xe5 23 ♗xh5 ♗xb2?! *(D)*

The point of White's operation is that the endgame after 23...♕xh5? 24 ♕xh5 gxh5 25 ♖d1 provides real chances of salvation. However, if Black inserts 23...h6! he wins quickly. The text-move prolongs the fight.

W



24 ♗e2 ♗xc1 25 ♕xc1 ♕xh2

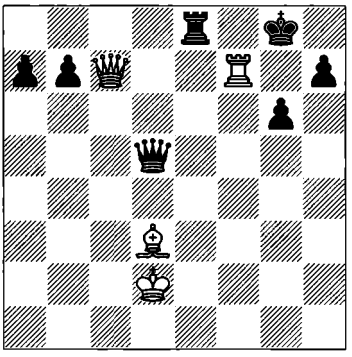
The choice of the pawn to capture – this one or the one on e4 (after 25...♕h4+) – is a matter of taste, but the remaining centre pawn to a certain extent justifies White's search for counterplay.

26 ♗d3 ♕xa2

After 26...♕g3+ 27 ♔e2 f5 the realization of Black's advantage is easier.

27 ♕c7 ♕a1+ 28 ♔d2 ♕b2+ 29 ♔d1 ♖f8 30 exd5 ♕b3+ 31 ♔e2 ♖e8+ 32 ♔d2 ♕xd5 33 ♖xf7 *(D)*

B



With the rooks off the board, the white king does not have to worry about mating threats. Four pawns outrank the bishop, of course, but the technical stage is not simple. First, pawn advances expose the black king and increase White's chances of chasing it; second, the queen and the bishop combo is capable of stopping either passed pawn pair on its own, so the pairs' alternating motion must be coordinated.

33...♕xf7 34 ♗c4 ♖e6 35 ♕c8+ ♔g7 36 ♗xe6 ♕f4+ 37 ♔e2 ♕e4+ 38 ♔d2 ♔f6 39 ♗c4 ♕d4+ 40 ♗d3 ♕b4+ 41 ♔e2 ♕e7+ 42 ♔f3 ♔g7 43 ♗c4?

This allows an exchange of queens that solves all of Black's technical problems.

43...♕f8+ 44 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 45 ♔f4 a5 46 ♗b5 ♔e7 47 ♔e5 h5 48 ♗d3 g5 49 ♗e2 h4 50 ♗g4 a4 51 ♔d4 ♔d6 0-1

Let's sum up the results. The variations examined in this chapter do not aspire to refute our opening and shouldn't cause Black to panic. At the same time they are based on the fundamental principles governing the initial stage of the game and are quite acceptable for the purpose of fighting for an advantage. The basis of these variations was laid down long ago, and there aren't many notable innovations, although certain changes in the popularity and the assessment of this or that continuation do take place. In particular, today the system with 4 ♗g5 is in vogue.

8 Closed Systems: White Plays e3

In this concluding chapter we shall examine systems that at first sight are the least ambitious for White. He does not strive to seize the centre immediately, and nor does he seek an active development of his dark-squared bishop in the early stages of the game.

However, this approach has its positive side too. Firstly, omitting a move by the bishop saves a tempo that will be useful in developing the initiative in some other direction; second, the bishop is ready to nip in the bud any counterplay along the a5-e1 diagonal or, following its opposing number's departure for the long diagonal, seek gainful employment on another one – a3-f8.

While logic informs us that the battle for the maximal achievements has to be waged in the main theatres of war, which are covered here in Chapters 3-6, the variations cited in this chapter give White some scope for optimism. After all, he is a tempo up on his opponent, and familiarity with the subtleties and experience of playing the resulting positions can make these lines into fairly potent weapons in practice.

In the lines of **Game 24** (B.Socko-Gopal) White strives for active play on the queenside, in the main game with b4, while there are also lines where the queen moves to b3 in the style of the Russian System, but with the move e3 played first.

In **Game 25** (Tregubov-Jaracz), we examine lines in which White develops his king's bishop first of all, in the main game by exchanging on d5 and then playing ♗c4. The other options covered feature the moves ♗e2 and ♗d3; in all these lines, Black will generally play ...c5 at some stage, though a solid approach with ..c6 is feasible too, given that White's own play is a little sluggish.

Game 24 [D94]

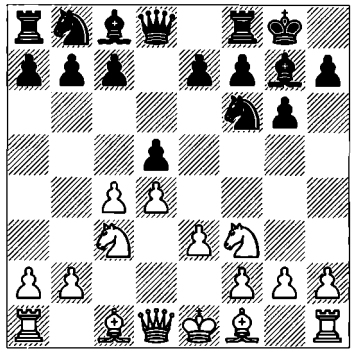
Bartosz Socko – Geetha Gopal

Gibraltar 2008

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3

Is there any point in saving time on the development of the knight and playing 4 e3 first? In most cases this is a mere transposition, with the only notable independent line being perhaps 4...♗g7 5 ♕b3 e6 6 ♕a3, for the moment holding up Black's castling. Then 6...♕e7 7 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 cannot be recommended because of 8 b3, when the bishop continues to harass the black king from a3, while its exchange would leave the dark squares weak. In response to 6...♗f8 White does not have to go back with a repetition but can try 7 ♕a4+. Black has several ways to solve the resulting problems, such as with the ...♘c6-e7 manoeuvre.

4...♗g7 5 e3 0-0 *(D)*



W

This is the starting position of this chapter's systems. Having left the c1-bishop on its initial square, White reckons that the tempo he saved will prove useful in seizing the initiative in

another development set-up. He has several options to this end.

6 b4

Before discussing the ramifications of this queenside space-grab, we shall cover several of White's other ideas.

Since we have already mentioned the development of the queen to b3, let's follow this direction further – 6 ♕b3 *(D)*.

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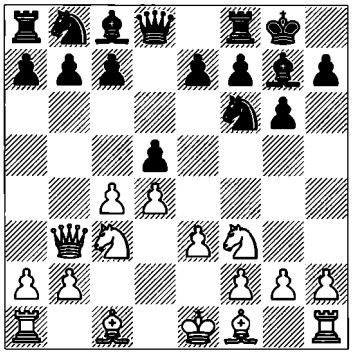

The principal difference between this version and the games in Chapter 6 is that White is ready to recapture on c4 with the bishop and is not obliged to centralize his queen excessively. Black has two plans:

1) Maintaining the pawn on d5 (lines 'a' and 'b'). This can be achieved by bolstering it with one of its neighbours on the left or on the right. Why do the continuations that we previously considered dubious turn out to be acceptable in this case? The explanation lies in the position of White's dark-squared bishop – confined by its own pawn-chain, it does not participate in taking advantage of the weak squares that now appear in Black's camp.

2) Ceding the centre with the hope of exposing the drawbacks of the set-up with the queen on b3 and the bishop on c4 (line 'c').

Having set the scene, let's turn to the specifics:

a) The position after 6...c6 can be claimed with equal justification by both the Grünfeld Defence and the Slav. Since by most of the major classifications it formally belongs to our opening, we shall devote some attention to it. Besides reinforcing the centre, Black also does not rule out ...dxc4 followed by the standard advance of the queenside pawns. Here 7 ♗d2 looks logical – first, White maintains the so-called "struggle for a tempo"; in case of the capture on c4 he will recapture with the bishop from f1 in one leap; second, he intends to deploy his forces with ♖c1, cxd5 and ♘b5. This is frequently met with 7...e6, securely defending the central bastion and in case of an exchange on d5 planning to recapture with the e-pawn. However, that shelves the c8-bishop's hopes for an honourable future, and although Black has no terminal weaknesses, he will have to fight in cramped quarters for the next phase of the struggle.

b) If the d5-pawn's other neighbour steps forward, i.e. 6...e6, then subsequent play resembles the Tartakower Queen's Gambit: the queen's bishop is fianchettoed on b7, followed by its eventual activation. Here is an example: 7 ♗d2 b6 8 ♗e2 ♗b7 9 0-0 ♘bd7 10 cxd5 ♘xd5 11 ♘a4 e5, Burmakin-Navara, Dubai 2005.

c) Naturally, the second plan is initiated with 6...dxc4, and after 7 ♗xc4 *(D)* the path forks:

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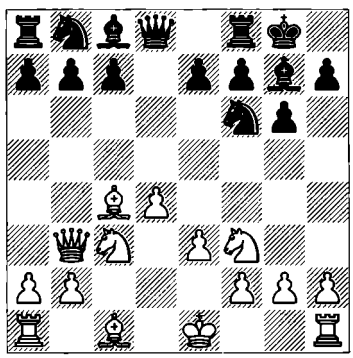

c1) There is the typical undermining thrust 7...c5, when the natural reaction 8 d5, restricting the scope of the queen-and-bishop tandem, doesn't go too well with the preceding play. The other continuation is 8 dxc5 ♕a5, and the pattern of subsequent play is already familiar to us.

c2) 7...♘c6 threatens ...♘a5 but allows complications after 8 ♘e5. The exchange 8...♘xe5 9 dxe5 is forced. Now 9...♘g4 10 f4 restricts the black knight's rights, while 9...♘d7 leads to a sharp and unclear game after 10 e6. The other continuation 10 ♗xf7+?! is risky: 10...♔h8 11 ♗c4 (11 f4? loses a piece to 11...e6) 11...♘xe5, and White has wasted time on an exchanging operation.

Let's move on to the next attempt to fight for the initiative on the queenside – 6 ♗d2 *(D)*.

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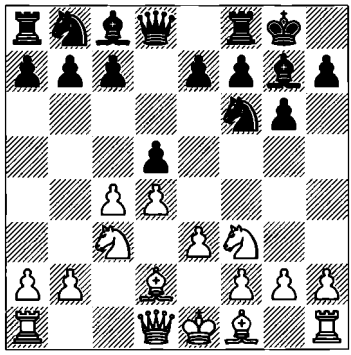
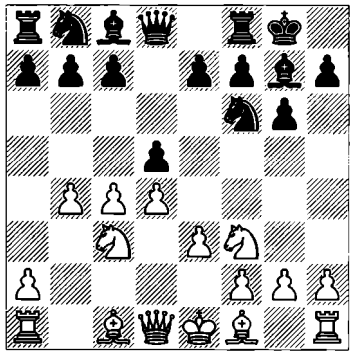


In contrast to the similar manoeuvre in Game 6, White is not planning to carry out the e4 advance, as the loss of tempo renders this entirely toothless. Rather, he makes a useful move and invites Black to clarify his intentions, which will determine the development of the other white pieces. Black has many options, the most principled being 6...c5, considering that the bishop has temporarily obstructed the white queen's control over the centre squares. A temporary pawn sacrifice secures Black rapid and comfortable development: 7 dxc5 ♘a6 8 cxd5 ♘xc5 9 ♗c4 ♗f5 10 0-0 ♖c8 11 ♕e2 ♘fe4, and Black can count at the very least on restoring the material equality.

We now return to 6 b4 *(D)*:

B



A blunt move, at once commencing a queenside attack. As is the case with all pawn advances, it leaves in its wake weaknesses that are not significant should the initiative succeed, but will be sensitive in case of its failure. Pawn moves in the opening also use up tempi at the expense of piece development, and constant care should be taken that the lag in development does not assume dangerous proportions.

6...c6

It would appear that Black can forget all about ...c5, but nevertheless this undermining counterblow is still possible – in two versions, even:

a) After the introductory 6...a5 7 b5 c5 all the same 8 bxc6 bxc6 9 ♗a3 restores White's control over the c5-square, whereas the a5-pawn takes an important square away from its own queen.

b) 6...b6 clearly prepares ...c5. Then:

b1) The main continuation used to be 7 ♕b3, when Black can treat the position in the spirit of the Tartakower Queen's Gambit with 7...♗b7 or choose the thematic 7...c5.

b2) Recently 7 ♗a3 c5 8 bxc5 bxc5 *(D)* has become popular.

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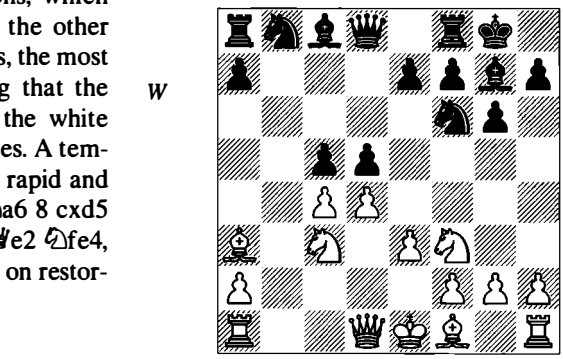

After 9 ♖c1 (the immediate 9 ♗xc5? gives Black a serious initiative after 9...♘a6 10 ♗a3 ♕a5 11 ♗b2 ♖b8) 9...♘e4 White can choose between playing for piece activity, or the pawn-grab under improved circumstances:

b21) 10 cxd5 ♘xc3 11 ♖xc3 cxd4 12 ♘xd4 ♕xd5 13 ♕b3 ♗e6 14 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♗b5 a6 16 ♗a4 ♖a7 and White's activity was neutralized in Korchnoi-Svidler, European Clubs Cup, Fügen 2006.

b22) 10 ♗xc5!? poses interesting problems; e.g., 10...♘xc5 (10...♕a5 11 ♕a4) 11 dxc5 ♕a5 12 ♕d2 ♘a6 (12...dxc4 13 ♗xc4 ♘c6 14 ♘d5) 13 c6 ♖d8 14 ♘xd5 ♕a3 15 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 16 ♕xd8+ ♔g7 17 ♕d2 ♖b8 18 ♘d4 ♖b2 (Bilobrk-Berkes, Bosnian Team Ch, Vogosca 2007) 19 ♕c3 ♕xa2 20 c5 ♖b1 21 ♗c4 and White is consolidating.

We now return to 6...c6 *(D)*:

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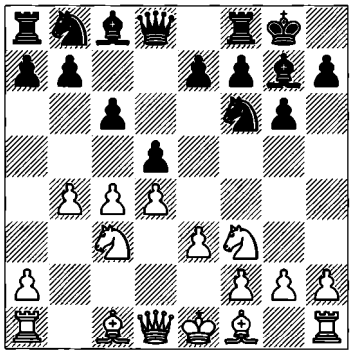

This ushers in another plan of counterplay aiming to expose the minuses of the early b4. Reinforcing the centre, Black retains the right to hobble the b4-pawn, followed by its exchange for his a-pawn; the c-pawn can be used then to clear the long diagonal.

7 ♗b2 ♗f5

This is one of several natural continuations: prior to commencing the planned operation, Black makes a useful move, waiting for the f1-bishop to leave its place.

Also played are the immediate 7...♘e4 and 7...♗g4, and the attempt to initiate at once concrete play with 7...a5.

8 ♗e2 dxc4

In this system this general idea has been known for a long time, but at precisely this point it is relatively new. Usually 8...♘e4 or 8...♘bd7 has been played here.

9 ♗xc4 b5 10 ♗b3 a5 *(D)*

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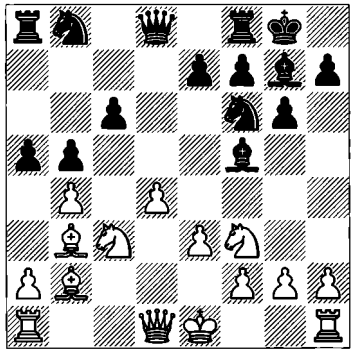

Since maintaining a pawn on b4 with 11 a3 is not prudent – it will prove to be weaker than Black's on c6 – the black queenside pawns acquire mobility and are about to raise the question of who has the initiative in this sector of the board.

11 bxa5 ♕xa5 12 0-0 ♘bd7 13 ♕e2

By attacking the b5-pawn, White forestalls the ...c5 advance, while also threatening to set his centre in motion.

13...b4

Thus Black drives the knight away.

14 ♘a4

Underestimating the reply; White should have retreated to b1 with a roughly even game.

14...♕b5 *(D)*

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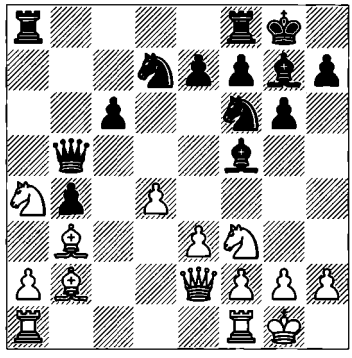

Black is ready to devalue his pawn-island in order to give his opponent a weakness on c5 and, crucially, seize the powerful outpost on c3.

15 ♕xb5

15 ♕d1 is hardly any better, as then the queen could face an unpleasant opposition from a rook on d8, and it would still be difficult to bring the a4-knight back into the game.

15...cxb5 16 ♘c5 ♘xc5 17 dxc5 ♘e4 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 *(D)*

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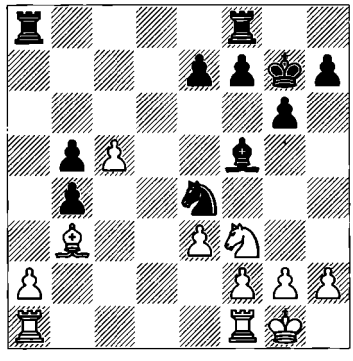

19 ♖fc1

The desire to get rid of the arch-nemesis – the black knight – by means of 19 ♗d5 would deprive the a2-pawn of protection. Black would then gang up on it by doubling rooks, and

White could not use the b1-square to counterattack along the b-file.

19...♘c3 20 ♔f1 ♖a3 21 ♘d4

The attempt to block the enemy bishop's diagonal with the subsequent attack on the b4-pawn fails to solve White's problems: 21 ♘e1 ♖c8 22 f3 ♖xc5 23 e4 ♗e6 24 ♗xe6 (24 ♘c2 ♘xa2) 24...fxe6 25 ♘d3 ♖c4 26 ♘e5 ♖c8 27 ♘d3 ♔f6 28 ♘xb4 ♖c4 29 ♘d3 ♘xe4.

21...♖c8 22 ♘xf5+ gxf5 23 ♖c2 ♖xc5 24 ♖d1 ♘e4 25 ♖b2 ♖c3 *(D)*

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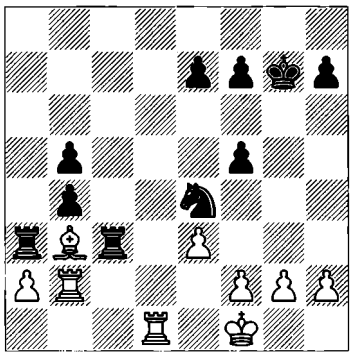

26 g4?

White's position cannot be envied, but this move changes its evaluation from bad to lost. Besides yet another pawn, Black obtains mating threats. Let's examine White's other options:

a) 26 ♖d5? loses at once: 26...♖c1+ 27 ♔e2 ♘c3+ 28 ♔d2 ♖xb3.

b) 26 ♗d5 ♘c5 27 ♖xb4 e6 28 ♗f3 ♖xa2 leads to a near-zugzwang situation. Now in order to secure the second rank against an attack, one rook must keep an eye on the c5-knight, and the other on the d3-square. Also, the bishop and the king must provide for the ♗e2 defence in reply to the ...♘d3 leap. Despite the fact that the battlefield has shrunk considerably, it is not clear what White is to do once he runs out of pawn moves.

c) White has a choice of rook endings a pawn down, such as 26 ♖d4 ♘c5 27 h4 ♘xb3 28 axb3 ♖axb3 29 ♖xb4 ♖xb4 30 ♖xb4 ♖c5.

d) There is the passive stance 26 ♗c2 ♘d6 27 ♗b3 ♘c4 28 ♖bb1, inviting Black to demonstrate how he intends to strengthen his position.

26...fxg4 27 ♖d4 f5 28 ♖xb4 ♖c1+ 29 ♔g2 ♘g5 30 ♗d5 ♖d3 31 ♖xb5 f4 32 f3?!

This loses at once. White could fish for chances with 32 h4 gxh3+ 33 ♔h2 fxe3 34 fxe3 ♖xe3 35 a4.

32...♘h3 33 fxg4 fxe3 34 ♖5b3 ♘f4+ 35 ♔g3 ♖xb3 36 ♖xb3 ♘xd5 0-1

Game 25 [D94]

Pavel Tregubov – Pawel Jaracz

European Ch, Warsaw 2005

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 e3

In the previous game we devoted attention to lines with ♕b3 and b4. Our focus here will be on lines where White adopts a very natural approach – first of all he develops his light-squared bishop, either to e2 or d3, or (as in the main game) to c4 after an exchange on d5.

5...0-0

Although for a true Grünfeld fan the c-pawn's road to glory leads to c5, here the self-imposed restriction of White's dark-squared bishop adds arguments in favour of 5...c6 *(D)*.

This position is very popular, and is reached more commonly via the initial moves of the Slav Defence – today's Closed opening No. 1. Black maintains pawn parity in the centre,

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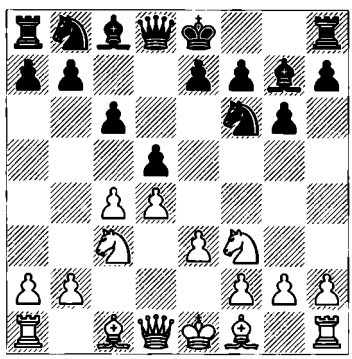

which conforms to the classical principles of the game in the opening stage.

Of course, having chosen ...c6, Black will rarely profit from playing a quick ...c5, given

the loss of tempo. Therefore Black builds a pawn-wedge on the light squares – c6-d5-e6 – generally after first exchanging his bishop on f3. He has no weaknesses or bad pieces, but having ceded the bishop-pair, he should maintain the closed character of the fight, which diminishes his hopes for active counterplay. A protracted struggle, where White strives to obtain space for his bishops, is likely. One sample line is 6 ♗e2 0-0 7 0-0 a6 8 b3 ♘e4 9 ♗b2 ♘xc3 10 ♗xc3 ♗g4 11 h3 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 e6, Carlsen-Bu Xiangzhi, Biel 2007. However, we shall not be going into further detail on this line, on which there is extensive theory due to its importance to the Slav Defence, as there is no need for a Grünfeld player to restrict himself to the ...c6 approach.

6 cxd5

In the previous game we covered the plans that give priority seizing the initiative on the queenside. Here we shall examine lines where the kingside is developed more rapidly.

First we should note that 6 ♗d3 does not entice serious players, as the bishop obstructs the queen's file and the advance e4 will never come to pass, as Black at once replies 6...c5, with a good game.

The most natural continuation is therefore 6 ♗e2 *(D)*.

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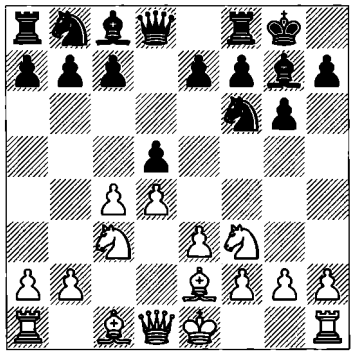

The most principled reply here is also 6...c5. Then:

a) The typical reaction 7 dxc5 promises no advantage. After 7...♕a5 8 0-0 (or 8 ♗d2) 8...dxc4 9 ♗xc4 ♕xc5 the bishop's absence from f4 noticeably improves Black's mood, while following 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 ♕xd5 ♗xc3+ 10 ♗d2 ♖d8 the queen sacrifice 11 ♕xd8+?! ♕xd8 12 ♗xc3 is not completely sound, so White would be prudent to agree to an equal ending by 11 ♗xc3 ♕xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♖xd5.

b) Nowadays 7 0-0 cxd4 8 exd4 is preferred, transposing into positions that frequently arise from other openings. If within the next few moves Black exchanges on c4, then a standard IQP set-up appears on the board. If on the other hand Black is unwilling to determine his plans early on, White can go for the c5 advance, with the play typical of certain lines in the Nimzo-Indian or Caro-Kann.

Alternatively, Black can content himself with the fact that the f1-bishop has wasted a tempo, and exchange by 6...dxc4 7 ♗xc4, and only then carry out 7...c5. This position is known from the Queen's Gambit Accepted, with White already castled. In our case Black's extra move cannot hurt him, but nevertheless ...c5 without exchanging first looks more logical, as it is hard to see how Black can benefit from the fact that the d4-pawn has acquired the ability to advance.

6...♘xd5 7 ♗c4 *(D)*

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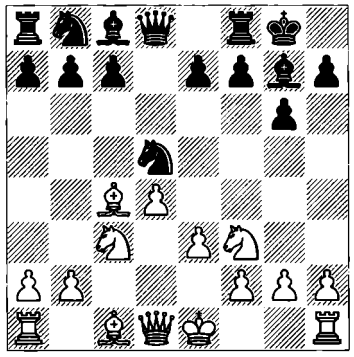

Thus White brings out his bishop to c4 in one move, while at the same time the black knight also changes its position. It only remains to find out if this favours either side in some way.

7...♘xc3

There is no sensible way to keep the knight on d5, so the other option is 7...♘b6. After the obvious 8 ♗b3 *(D)* Black has to determine with which pawn to undermine his opponent's chain:

a) If this mission is assigned to the e-pawn, then in order to prepare it, the queen's knight has to come out to c6 or d7. Naturally, 8...♘c6 is the more active. After 9 0-0 e5 a double capture on e5 with the aim of obtaining a mobile e- and f-pawn phalanx lacks support due to

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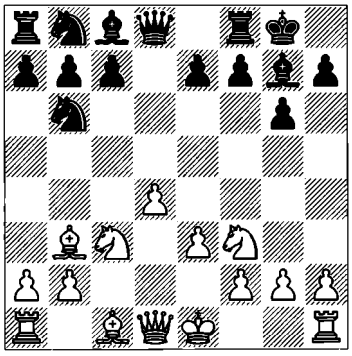

insufficient development, and the play is centred around a formation that we have seen several times after 10 d5 ♘a5, followed by the blockade of White's centre or its remnant – the pawn on d5.

b) The undermining thrust from the other side can be carried out without preparations: 8...c5. The attempt to hold on to the material advantage with 9 dxc5 ♕xd1+ 10 ♔xd1 ♘6d7 11 ♘d5 ♘c6 12 ♘d4 (or 12 ♗a4) has failed to bring White success, as Black obtains sufficient compensation. White usually chooses 9 0-0 *(D)*.

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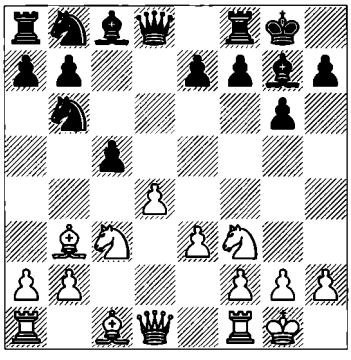

Now:

b1) With 9...c4, Black demonstrated an original treatment in Pelletier-Mamedyarov, European Clubs Cup, Kemer 2007. Such an advance is often considered dubious, because White's central majority ranks higher, but in this case Black's active pieces prevent the advance of the centre pawn group: 10 ♗c2 ♘c6 11 ♕e2 ♗g4 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 e5.

b2) After 9...cxd4 10 exd4 ♘c6 11 d5 ♘a5 12 ♖e1 *(D)* the standard pawn-formation appears on the board, with the slightly novel position of the bishop on b3.

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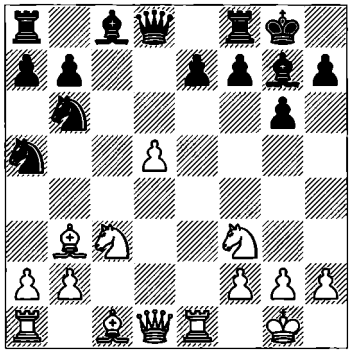

Here we shall note two dashing attacks by White, the first one being successful, though the overall assessment is unclear:

b21) 12...♖e8 13 ♘e5 ♘d7 14 ♘xf7 should lead to equality, but Black went awry in Tregubov-Macieja, Bundesliga 2006/7.

b22) Events developed along a less fortunate course for White after 12...♗g4 13 ♗g5 ♖e8 14 d6 ♕xd6 15 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 16 ♖xe7+ ♕xe7 17 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 in Tregubov-Kurnosov, Moscow 2008. In the ensuing play White failed to take advantage of the enemy king's position in the centre, and Black's compensation turned out to be more important.

8 bxc3 *(D)*

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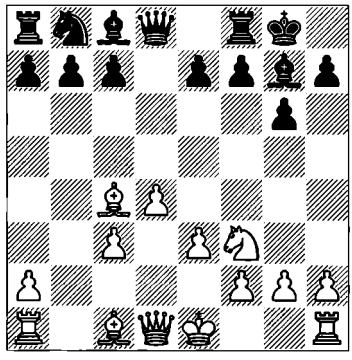

Similar pawn-formations can be seen in other openings as well, including the Queen's Gambit and the Queen's Indian Defence. It is also typical of the Grünfeld Defence, the difference being the superior placement of the bishop on g7. A significant portion of this book is devoted to similar positions with the difference that White's e-pawn has advanced to e4. Nothing prevents it from stepping forward here as well, but for the moment that would not be to White's advantage: first, a tempo is lost, and second,

holding the centre is considered to be more difficult with the bishop on c4 and the knight on f3, and Black's counterplay has good chances of success. Once White completes his development, though, the advance of the centre pawns will be on the agenda, provided Black doesn't force him to solve other problems in the meantime. For now the c3-d4-e3 wedge fulfils its task, restricting Black's dark-squared bishop, although it is hard to call its opposing white number active either, and that is one of White's main concerns.

Let's list Black's next few moves – the c-pawn goes to c5, the knight to a5, the queen's bishop to b7 or g4. His plans include setting up a blockade on the light squares, operations along the c-file, and the advance ...e5 is also not ruled out. The choice of the actual move-order and prioritizing the plans is up to the individual player.

8...♘c6

It is more common to begin with 8...c5, when a topical position is reached after 9 0-0 ♕c7 10 ♕e2. White gears up for the e4 advance, if necessary agreeing to station the queen's bishop on the unappealing post on b2 for the time being, in order to bolster the d4-pawn.

9 0-0 ♘a5 10 ♗e2 b6

White retreated the bishop to e2 so as not to obstruct the d-file, but this deprived the advance of the e-pawn of support. Black therefore decides that a fianchetto of his queen's bishop is more expedient in this case.

11 ♗a3 ♗b7 12 ♕c2 c5 *(D)*

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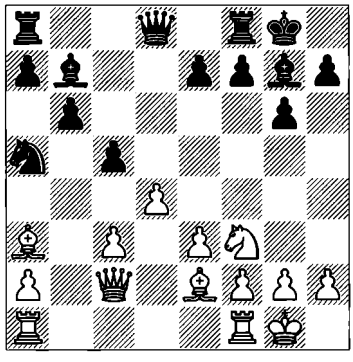

With the plan of development chosen by White, his opponent's desire to open the c-file is natural.

13 dxc5

If White allows an exchange on d4, the major pieces will start disappearing on the c-file, and there are no apparent reasons to expect an advantage in the minor-piece ending. Therefore White attempts to obtain the initiative on the queenside, counting on the newly-opened files, the a5-knight's insecure position and the weakness of the enemy pawn on c5. The move played does not aim at winning a pawn, as a further capture on b6 would activate Black's pieces with the likely elimination of all the pawns on the queenside; on the contrary, White is striving to close the c-file.

13...♕c7 14 ♖ab1 ♖fc8 *(D)*

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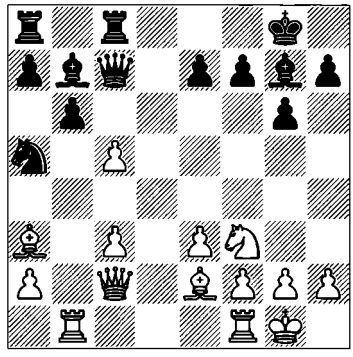

15 ♖fc1

In order to force Black to capture on c5, White prepares to push his pawn to c4; then the exchange on b6 will be a real threat, as it will be followed by the c5 advance.

15...e6

This opens another line of work for the dark-squared bishop but weakens the long diagonal. At the moment it is not clear if this has any significance.

16 c4 bxc5 17 ♖b5 *(D)*

The ensuing forced play is tempting but not mandatory. 17 ♗b2, offering to exchange bishops, was not a bad idea.

17...♗c6

If Black defends the pawn by 17...♗f8, White gets the same attack with 18 ♕c3 and 19 ♗b2 for free.

18 ♖xc5 ♗f8

After 18...♘b7 19 ♖g5 the rook is out of action and has to find a way home, although that does not fully compensate for the loss of a pawn. If Black blocks its way with 18...e5, White will get activity and two pawns for the

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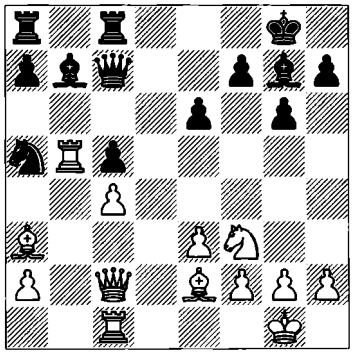


exchange: 19 ♕c3 ♘b7 20 ♖xc6 ♕xc6 21 ♘xe5 and 22 f4.

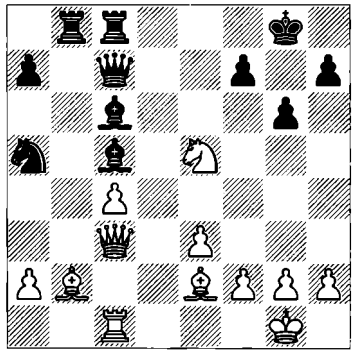
19 ♕c3 ♗xc5 20 ♗b2 e5

An attempt to flee with the king by 20...♔f8? fails: 21 ♕h8+ ♔e7 22 ♗f6+ ♔d7 23 ♖d1+ ♗d5 (23...♗d6 24 ♘e5#) 24 ♕xh7, and the extra rook is of no help to such a king.

21 ♘xe5 ♖ab8 *(D)*

Taking advantage of the momentary respite, Black intends to destroy the terrible battery that is lined up on the long diagonal. This is also the only defence; after 21...f6? White has a pleasant choice between 22 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 23 ♕xa5 and 22 ♘g4.

W

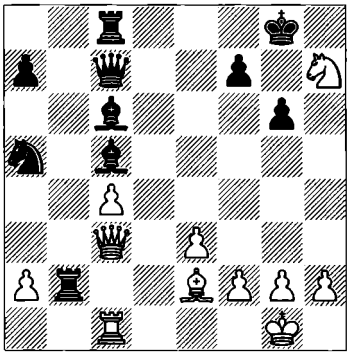


22 ♘d7

Now the game ends in a draw. Preserving the bishop is a tempting idea, but after 22 ♗a1?! ♗b4 23 ♕d4 ♕d6 24 ♘xc6 ♕xd4 25 ♘xd4 ♗a3 26 ♖d1 ♘xc4 White's compensation is already insufficient. 22 ♘xg6 leads to a position that is hard to evaluate after 22...fxg6 23 ♕h8+ ♔f7 24 ♕xh7+ ♔e8 25 ♕xg6+ ♕f7 26 ♕g5. If White wants to continue the fight, the line 22 ♘g4 ♖xb2 23 ♘h6+ ♔f8 24 ♕xb2 is available.

22...♖xb2 23 ♘f6+ ♔f8 24 ♘xh7+ ♔g8 *(D)*

W



Going into the centre would be imprudent, as after the capture on b2 White obtains three pawns for the piece and the possibility of creating new threats. If White takes the rook now, the mechanism of the perpetual check works for a while, but White is unlikely to create any sort of serious attack with just two pieces.

25 ♘f6+ ♔f8 26 ♘h7+ ♔g8 27 ♘f6+ ♔f8 28 ♘h7+ ½-½

We can note the current trend of growing popularity of such restrained play in the opening. This can be explained in part by White's weariness of the main continuations that demand progressively more extensive opening knowledge and in part by the desire to play more solidly and to avoid rocking the boat excessively.

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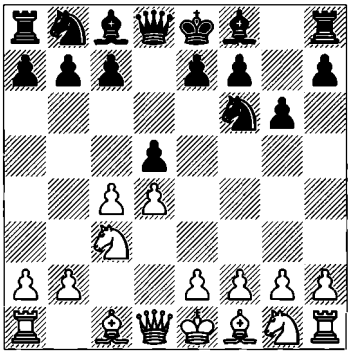
B: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 without 4 cxd5
C: Other Lines

A)

1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 g6
3 ♘c3 d5

W



4 cxd5 ♘xd5
5 e4

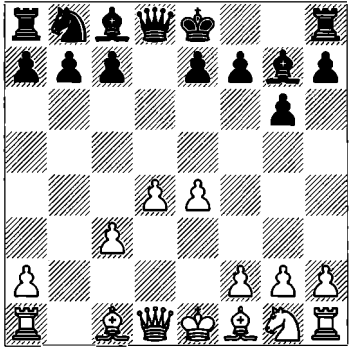
5 ♗d2 *28*
5 ♘a4 *32*

5 ... ♘xc3

5...♘b6?! *24*

6 bxc3 ♗g7 *39*

W



7 ♘f3 *52*

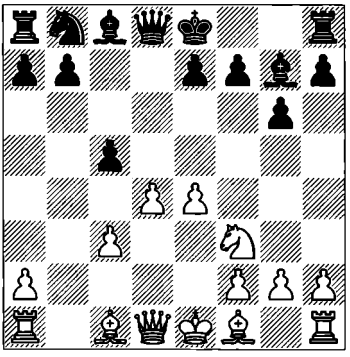
7 ♗e3 *52*

7 ♗c4 *39* 7...c5 8 ♘e2 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 0-0 *41*:

a) 10...♘a5 *41*
b) 10...♕c7 *48*
c) 10...♗d7 *48*
d) 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♗g4 *44*
e) 10...♗g4 *43*

7 ... c5

W



8 ♖b1 *61*

8 ♗e2 *52*
8 ♗e3 *56*

8 ... 0-0

8...♕a5 *65*
8...cxd4 9 cxd4 ♕a5+ *65*
8...♘c6 *66*

9 ♗e2 *61*

9 ... cxd4

9...b6 *62*
9...♕a5 *76*
9...♗g4 *66*
9...♘c6 *66* 10 d5:

a) 10...♗xc3+ *66*
b) 10...♘e5 *69*

10 cxd4 ♕a5+ *77*

B)

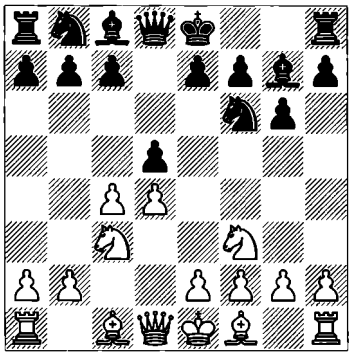
1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 g6
3 ♘c3 d5
4 ♘f3

4 e3 *116*

4 ♕b3 *84*
4 ♕a4+ *84*
4 ♗g5 *98*
4 ♗f4 *107* 4...♗g7:
a) 5 e3 *107*
b) 5 ♖c1 *107*
c) 5 ♘f3 *111*

4 ... ♗g7

W



5 ♕b3 *83*

a) 5 ♕a4+ *84*
b) 5 ♗g5 *103*
c) 5 ♗f4 *111*
d) 5 cxd5 ♘xd5:
d1) 6 ♘a4 *33*
d2) 6 e4 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 *52*
e) 5 e3 *116* 5...0-0 (5...c6 *120*):
e1) 6 b4 *117*
e2) 6 ♕b3 *117*
e3) 6 ♗d2 *118*
e4) 6 ♗e2 *121*
e5) 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 ♗c4 *121*

5 ... dxc4

5...c6 *84*

6 ♕xc4 0-0 *85*
7 e4 *85*

Now:

7...a6 *85*
7...♗g4 *88*
7...♘c6 *88*
7...♘a6 *93*

C)

1 d4

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2:

a) 4...c6 5 0-0 0-0 6 d4 d5 *11*
b) 4...0-0 5 0-0 d5 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 ♘c3 ♘c6 8 d4 ♘b6 *16*

1 ... ♘f6
2 c4

2 ♘f3 g6:

a) 3 c4 – *2 c4 g6 3 ♘f3*
b) 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 d5 5 0-0:
b1) 5...0-0 6 c4 – *2 c4 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 d5 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 0-0*
b2) 5...c6:
b21) 6 ♘bd2 0-0 7 c4 *10*
b22) 6 c4: 6...dxc4 *10*; 6...0-0 *11*

2 ... g6
3 g3

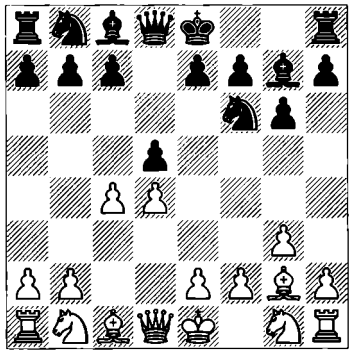
3 f3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘b6 *24*
3 ♘f3 ♗g7 (3...d5?! *25*) 4 ♘c3 d5 – see B

3 ... ♗g7

3...c6 4 ♗g2 d5 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♘f3 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 *7*

4 ♗g2 d5

W



5 ♘f3

5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e4 *20*

5 ... 0-0

5...c6:
a) 6 0-0: 6...dxc4 *10*; 6...0-0 *11*
b) 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 0-0 0-0 *7*

6 0-0

6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 0-0:
a) 7...c5 *16*
b) 7...♘b6 8 ♘c3 ♘c6 *16*

6 ... c6 *11*

6...dxc4 *15*

7 cxd5

Or:
7 ♘c3 *11*
7 b3 *11*
7 ♘e5 *11*
7 ♕b3 *11*
7 ♘bd2 *10*

7 ... cxd5 *7*

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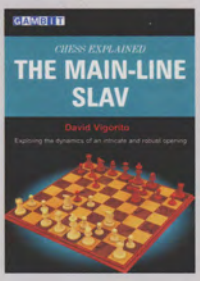

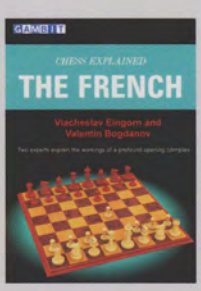

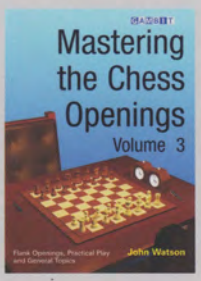

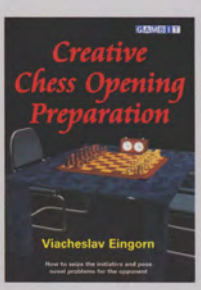

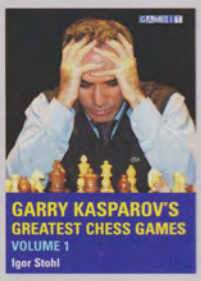

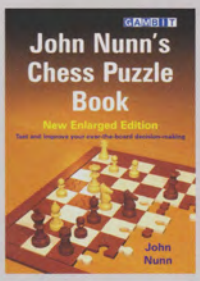

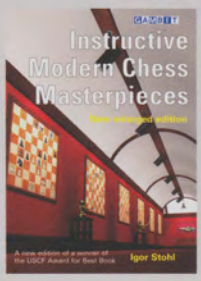

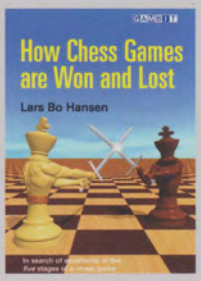

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ISBN-13: 978-1-906454-06-7
ISBN-10: 1-906454-06-X